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LADY ALICE;

OR,

THE NEW UNA.

A Novel.

*By J. J. Vincent
"Huntington"*

"And old Sylvanus selfe bethinkes not, what
To think of wight so fayre; but gazing stood
In doubt to deem her borne of earthly brood:
Sometimes dame Venus selfe he seems to see;
But Venus never had so sober mood:
Sometimes Diana he her takes to be;
But misseth bow and shaftes, and buskins to her knee."

THE FAERIE QUEENE, B. I., C. VI., ST. XVI.



NEW YORK:
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P R E F A C E.

IT would seem that hardly any thing can be more misapplied than the pains which authors take in the prefaces of their books. Especially, to explain beforehand, in detail, the principles on which a work of fiction has been constructed, and the moral at which it aims, or to vindicate, in like manner, the probability of the incidents; to expose, in short, the mechanism, and announce the solution, of what ought to remain secret, as the stimulus of curiosity, or serve, by its unexpected development, to gratify the craving which in every work of imagination demands a worthy purpose—this is to prove, in advance, that we do not understand our tools, or, at the very least, are dissatisfied with our achievement.

The greatest productions of the imagination—such as ‘Cymbeline’ or the ‘Tempest,’ for instance—never enjoyed this equivocal advantage of a key to their intent; it could, in fact, only have injured them; and if this be true of the works of that original genius which discovers for itself the moral and æsthetical maxims that guide its sublime deviations from routine, how much more must it hold in regard to those of inferior minds, whose highest claim (as in the case of the present author) is to have comprehended and imitated, at a humble distance, the genuine Masters.

Yet there are one or two observations that the author can not refrain from making, with a view to prevent misconceptions which the book itself can not obviate.

The circumstances of fortune and position, then, he would say, with which he has thought fit to invest his characters, are employed by him as mere drapery, although by no means as conventional drapery. He has borrowed from the ‘properties’ of his selected theater, but not without an even minutely careful discrimination.

Again, it will be obvious at once that a *conversion in a story* proves merely what is the private persuasion of the story-teller. “Had the Lions been the painters, the Beast would have been represented as conquering the Man!” The author is very far from forgetting so plain a principle; but that which is not affected by its admission is, the humbler yet more important truth which he really had a mind to illustrate; namely, that virtuous self-control, resistance to selfish and mean desires, &c.—moral goodness and purity, in short—are what really fit the intellect for the discovery of truth. If the conviction at which the hero of this tale arrived *had been* the true one, it is such a character as he is described who *ought* to have arrived at it.

Further, it may be supposed that the author, in delineating some ideally

perfect characters, means to claim for himself the purity (by no means unattainable, he is sure) which he has attributed to them, rather than the weakness and infatuation (suppose) of which he has traced the path to ruin in the most faulty of his personages; or, again, the sincere though imperfect penitence which he has ascribed to another: but no—a pretension of that sort could not be imputed to him seriously; rather, in dwelling so much and so feelingly on the thought of innocence and strength, he may be considered to confess that he has learned, at least by mental experience, how hateful and miserable are their opposites.

Last of all, the author can not refrain from saying something by way of explanation for certain persons to whom he feels that a peculiar deference is due—persons who do not, perhaps, read similar books as a general thing, but may read this book. They will find many points in it, he supposes, understated; importance given to what is form, and the substance left in doubt; or they may be more startled by the great prominence of the love-story, although this thing professes to be a novel; or they may strongly except to the plot in general, and to many of the incidents, and to the dénouement, as essentially connected with a species of interest that breathes indeed through all the Plastic Arts, that was the soul of ancient Poetry, and makes still the inexhaustible charm of our old Poets, but which the moderns, for some reason or other, have generally agreed to avoid.

To be “simple, sensuous, passionate,” was once the definition of Poetry; it is so no longer; and people say that the age is become *subjective*!

Now then, let it be observed that there is an unreality in uttering things speculatively true, not only when more than we ourselves enter into and believe, but when more than those can enter into to whom we address ourselves. And the same may be said of things practically good.

Then, further, Poetry, and *every* Art, while it does not ignore the actual state of the world altogether, must, if it would not abdicate its office, treat its main figure as if Paradise had not been forfeited, and human nature still were all radiant with its first glory. Try to fancy the object of the Artist, who, too aspiring, perhaps, attempts to do this in a tale of the time in which we live; admit the difficulty, and do not rashly say that the means were otherwise than indispensable.

The beauty of the soul of his heroine, as it seems to the author, shines forth through the very circumstances to which the objection is made, as in no other way it could. The idea of her sacrifice, too—how, being innocent, she paid the debt of personal humiliation, social banishment, and soul-piercing shame, owed by another; and that of her reward—how complete it was in the reverse of all the things she had suffered—all this is half an allegory, no doubt, and as such (not as a Tale of Real Life) must it be judged.

LADY ALICE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE Sorrentine peninsula, so famous in story, lies between the gulfs of Salerno and Naples; and in the neck of this peninsula, which, they say, was once an island, lies the beautiful Swiss-like valley of Cava. It is indeed not unlikely, that in some of the volcanic outbreaks by which the whole face of this classic region has been so often changed, the channel which once separated the mountains of Sorrentum and Amalfi from those of the Italian main-land may have been obliterated. The sharp eminences, picturesquely crowned with towers, which hem in the eastern side of the valley are gradually lost in loftier elevations rising to the high range of the distant Apennines; but the more abrupt and over-hanging western wall is formed by the naked, perforated peak of Monte Finestra, rising like an *aiguille* in the high Alps, and by the green chain of bizarre outline which connects that summit with the sea.

The great high road between Naples and Pæstum passes over this deep depression, winding through a district of sea-girt mountains; and in the center lies the small, episcopal city of Cava, whose bishop played so singular a part in the earlier sessions of the Council of Trent. The vale itself is a scene of the most luxuriant beauty;—a mingling of vineyards and olive-groves, with maize-fields and small green meadows; shaded by fine trees, cooled by running and falling waters, split by wild ravines, adorned by noble bridges spanning on arches of gigantic stride the deeper portions of the hollow vale, and sparkling with villas, hamlets and white convents.

At the period when this story opens (some five or six years ago) Cava was a spot unknown to foreigners. No detachment from the migratory flocks of our traveling countrymen had yet chosen it for an annual visit. But at that date a villa crowning one of the lesser eminences on the east of the valley, and therefore commanding its picturesque western wall, had been occupied for more than a month by two young Englishmen, who, whatever their motive in selecting this spot for their summer residence, certainly could not have meant to secure the society of their compatriots, and probably intended to avoid it.

These young men had fine, romantic names, like the heroes of some novel in the days of the Minerva press. They called themselves Augustus and Frederick Clifford; were brothers, as the identity of surname might denote; were rich, 'twas said, with apparent reason, as their establishment was on a generous footing; and

what recommended them more in Cava, they were Roman Catholics. The elder brought letters to the librarian of the Benedictine Monastery, Della Trinità, at Cava, from a Roman Prince bearing one of the most famous names of Italy, and who had married a daughter of the house to which the Englishman belonged. It bespoke the courtesy of the high-born monks for a relative of the Princess —.

Mass was said in the private chapel of their villa every morning by a priest of Cava, and regularly on Sundays both brothers assisted at the Messa cantata in the chapel of the monastery, celebrated for its organ, the splendor of its pontifical celebration, and the fine chanting of the monks. It was even intimated that the elder contemplated renouncing the world and entering the monastery as a brother of the order, for which his birth qualified him. This monastery, it must be said, was one of those asylums from terrestrial vanity into which no one could be admitted unless possessed of a spotless pedigree. But if Augustus Clifford, who on his first arrival in Cava was alone, entertained an idea of this sort, it was laid aside after he was joined by his younger brother. It is almost needless to add that both were treated with unbounded courtesy by the nobles of this once feudal district. And yet, though the reserve usually maintained toward the English, as heretics, by Italian females of the upper class, was exchanged in their case for the most open cordiality, and though at this season (it was June) there were families of the highest consideration from Naples rustivating in Cava, among whose members were included some fascinating and beautiful women, the young strangers did not avail themselves of the advances made them, further than civility required. Devoted to each other's society, they sought no other. Riding, boating, bathing, rambling over the hills or conversing at home under the awning that shaded their terrace, but always together, it seemed that they entertained for each other that impassioned friendship which is not unfrequently observed between men who are strangers to each other's blood, but between brothers is so rare.

It was on the first of June that Frederick Clifford arrived in Cava. A month had passed with the brothers in the manner above described, and it was on one of the earliest days of July that an accident happened which relaxed the strictness of their fraternal *tête-à-tête*. It was evening, and their dinner was ended, fruit and wine on the table, and candles (for the young Englishmen adhered to the hours of their country) when a thundering noise was heard in the adjoining apartment. Augustus Clifford caught

up a candle, and, heedless of his brother's quick remonstrance, rushed into the room whence the noise proceeded. His entrance was followed by a crash, his candle was extinguished, and clouds of dust disgorged through the open door into the room where the younger brother remained. When this had a little subsided, Frederick Clifford, entering with some caution, found his brother standing in the midst of the rubbish, bewildered, but, excepting a bruise of little moment, unhurt. A heavy ceiling, covered with solid mortar, and a ponderous frame-work of wood attached in the center to support a painted plafond, had come down *en masse*. It was an escape next to a miracle, and the Englishman sent a rich offering the next day to the hospital of our Lady of the Elm, to whose protection, and his own piety, the good people of Cava piously attributed it. How far he shared an opinion which he so far encouraged may appear by the following brief conversation.

It is a delicious afternoon, such as creeps cool and still over Italian mountains and in sight of blue Italian seas;—the brothers sit on their shady terrace, silent, a chess-board between them. In the manner of their play may be observed something of the difference in their characters. The elder hangs over the board with great attention for many minutes, and at last moves precipitately; the younger gives a glance at the situation of the pieces and plays, but with a judgment not easily criticised.

"Check-mate!"—'Tis Frederick Clifford who speaks.

"I see. Now there is no room for chance here; yet my imprudence ruins me! Had not I formed so hasty an attack—"

"You would have beaten me, as another time you will," said the younger brother, looking up from the chess-board. "But I must tell you; I have thought of a thing I will do. You are vexed at my staying at home on your account, and losing my bath and exercise. To-morrow morning then, you shall lie as long as you like ('twill assist very much the healing of your bruises) and I will ride down to Vietri before breakfast, and bathe. I can easily get back by nine, and in the afternoon you shall have your revenge. Is it good?"

"All your plans are good."

"As for the rest—your life being preserved in so great a danger proves that Providence watches over you."

"Say rather, that I am so rash by nature, that if there be a danger near, I am sure to expose myself to it. People like me are always having hair-breadth escapes."

"I admit that it is a lesson as well as a mercy," said the younger brother, beginning to replace the chess-men.

They played another game, which Frederick took care to lose; and the next morning, agreeably to the plan he had formed not to abridge his brother's enjoyment of his society, he set off for Vietri on horseback at the early hour of six. Vietri is a small white town which hangs on the mountain side, over the Salernian Gulf; and it is not more than two miles from Cava. Immediately below it is the narrow *marina* or beach. Here are fishers' houses; some hostels, a market, boats and sometimes shipping. The inhabitants are numerous, lazy and picturesque.

CHAPTER II.

THE eastern side of the rich and beautiful valley lay in the shadow of the mountains, though Monte Finestra, with his slopes of *débris* and the woods that skirt his base, gave back the rays of the sun, long since risen over the crest of the Apennines. The air was fresh then, so that the young Englishman, as his horse slowly descended the steep, winding mule-path, gathered closely round him a military cloak of the amplest dimensions, destined in his mind to serve another purpose, and reserved by fortune for another, yet different, which he did not at all anticipate.

The figure of Frederick Clifford was by this means quite concealed, but his features, which of course were open to observation, may here be hinted at. They were of a regularity rare in either sex, and were indeed almost too regular for the expression of any thing but intellect, and that of the serenest type. The severe purity of these sculptured lineaments was sustained by a complexion of opaline uniformity, and united to the dark color and massive curl of his luxuriant locks, would have led a careless observer to mistake his country. He might have been turned of twenty-three; but you would hardly have guessed so much by his beard, which, if he possessed it, was not apparent unless in a faint purplish tone that darkened his short upper lip; his oval cheek was radiant as that of a statue, and his firm chin as polished. Yet some elements of human gentleness softened this classic majesty. When he turned to ask a question of the groom who followed him, his voice, though manly, was sweet, almost like that of extreme youth, and the glance of his rich hazel eye, though careless, was kindly.

After a descent of some ten minutes, the path, reaching its lowest point, crossed a tremendous ravine by a stone bridge of a single arch, and then gradually ascended along the side of a hill covered with festooned vines, till it struck into the high road to Salerno, just below the Piazza di Cava. The ravine now spreads out into a deep cultured valley (the Cava, or hollow, from which the overhanging city derives its name) and the road is carried over it on a noble bridge which might vie with the finest Roman works. Beyond this, the broad highway, winding round the woody base of San Salvatore, penetrates a magnificent defile, and descends to the sea. The young man put his horse into a gallop, and in a quarter of an hour dismounted at the marina of Vietri.

A crowd of boats were conveying bathers of both sexes to and from the bathing-places. The Englishman looked for one that he could appropriate, but all were partly engaged. The boatman whom the brothers had employed, and whom, for the afternoons, they had retained, was putting off with a party of Italians. It was the Marchese Altino and two other gentlemen from Cava, with the three daughters of the Marchese, and their governess. The eldest Signorina Altino, a pretty brunette, touched her father's elbow. The latter looked round, perceived Clifford, made the boatmen put back, and prayed the Signor Don Federigo to join their party.

Clifford was not exactly shy, but neither did

this proposal quite suit him. He was going, he said, to a spot more distant than the Marchese, he was sure, would like; but if the latter would allow the boat to take him thither after putting ashore his own party, and the young ladies would permit it—

A general exclamation of—"Sicurissimo!—Padrone!" Clifford took a small parcel from the groom, and entered the boat.

The northern shore of the bay of Salerno is a chain of beautiful promontories. It is a coast dear alike to history and fable, and nature may still claim it as invested by her with a poetry that desolation and ignorance can not destroy. On the southern shore—a flat unwholesome lea backed by mountains—the temples of Pæstum, lifting their yellow columns in an uninhabitable plain, attest the exquisite civilization of Magna Græcia. But it was under the green acclivities that crown the precipitous northern coast that the boat of the Marchese Altino now shot along. The rocky base on which they rest, the loose and earthy portions having been worn away by the waves, is every where indented with recesses of varying depth, floored with sand, walled with rock, and, from the steepness of the shore, not only inaccessible, but invisible except from the water. It is to these recesses, exposed all day to the sun, and whose sandy floors a tideless sea never wets, that the inhabitants of this part of Italy resort for bathing.

Manners differ like climes. 'Tis a trite remark. This bathing in the open sea and beneath the open sky, is not very agreeable, at the first blush, to northern notions of delicacy in the more reserved of the sexes; yet the Signorine Altino, who would have been scandalized certainly by the demeanor that is quite a matter of course in English girls in society, got out of their father's boat with their governess when they had reached the slightly-sheltered recess which was to serve them for a dressing-room, with the most undisturbed self-possession. Clifford, who knew the customs of all countries, and had reasoned on all with the calmness of philosophy, thought not the worse of their modesty; although, had they been his countrywomen he might have doubted. The boat shot on some hundred yards, and the Marchese and his friends also went ashore in a convenient spot. They had already come further than the Cliffords had been wont, and were far withdrawn from the part of the coast frequented by bathers. Still Clifford resolved to go on; and declining with great courtesy a frank invitation on the part of his companions to join them, said that he was bound on a voyage of adventures. The good-natured Italians laughed.—"God give you good success, Don Federigo," they said, while they wondered at the insular reserve which even the humanizing influence of the Catholic religion had not been able to overcome. Our hero (for surely this is our hero) passes on to a region by him at least not previously explored.

The four stout oarsmen pulled well and together, for they counted on the foreigner's liberality. They put a good space between themselves and their recent companions; they rounded a point; they shot across a beautiful and very retired embrasure of the bay, and at a signal from Clifford, the oars rose upright, the boat swayed round till the stern grounded, and

the young man leaped ashore. The men silently pushed her off again, and in a minute were out of sight.

Clifford began forthwith to prepare for a bath which, at least in the ordinary way, he was not destined to enjoy. He spread his cloak in the sunniest hollow of the sand close to the rock. He untied the parcel he had taken from the groom, shook out the folds of an ample sheet of unbleached linen, fragrant with lavender, and spread it over the cloak. Clifford's dress was the negligent costume of an Italian summer, but which perhaps better than any other could have done, set off a figure that corresponded to the statuesque majesty of his ideal countenance. In his well-fashioned linen trowser and snowy tunic, he looked though somewhat modernized, the type of that form of blended grace and force, which antique Art ascribed to the irresistible lord of the bow and the lyre. It was at this stage of his toilet, and while he was in the act of removing from his neck a jeweled cross suspended there by a chain of gold, and which he kissed ere he laid it down, that a faint shriek mingled with the low dash of a wave over a sunken rock. Clifford left off undressing and looked over the water, with an air of curiosity rather than alarm. It seemed that he was too tranquil a person to be startled by any thing; but when, steadily gazing in the direction whence, as he was assured, the sound had come, he saw nothing, and the sound itself was not repeated, nor any thing that could be a sequel of it, an expression of anxiety succeeded even on that calm countenance; he dashed in, half-dressed as he was, and waded up to the waist.

From the green crest of the promontory whose outjutting formed this quiet cove, the sheer and overhanging rock descended to the water in a smooth wall, and divided his natural dressing-room from a similar nook not three yards distant from it. Clifford immediately perceived signs of its being similarly occupied too; but the bather, or the party, was absent. Beyond it, the shore abruptly retired, and a sharp line of rock was defined against sea and sky. From that quarter came faintly, over the waves, the voices and laughter of women or children. He took in all this, and turned once more to look over the water—an object rose flashing to the surface.

To dash forward, swim when he lost footing, plunge after the object when it disappeared, grasp a slight vestment, rise to the surface again with the unresisting form of its wearer, and bear it ashore—were the successive acts of as many moments. It was the body of a young female, attired in a long, sleeveless symar. Her long hair, which had not, it seemed, been restrained even in bathing, streamed from her head in wet tresses of apparently the softest auburn; a deadly pallor could not disguise the perfect loveliness of the face; the ivory arm was of faultless mold; and the wet, clinging drapery betrayed a symmetry which might have belonged rather to some nymph of the sea than any mortal maid. She did not breathe; her heart had ceased to beat; at least the artery at the wrist betrayed not the faintest pulsation to the delicate test of Clifford's fingers.

When the flame of life burns so low, that it can not even be discerned by our coarse senses,

a careless breath, a touch too much, is sufficient to extinguish it altogether. It must not be roughly fanned, but suffered to burn in a tranquil air. Clifford's conduct now was marked by absolute self-possession, and a singular confidence of knowledge. The dry, absorbent sand drank rapidly the moisture from the stranger's dress and floating hair. When he judged that this had proceeded far enough; he placed the passive form, still invested with the cold, wet robe, on the sort of couch he had prepared for his own repose after the bath, and wrapped the linen and cloak many times round her. The influence of the moderated application of a depressing agent, like cold and moisture, in recalling and stimulating that reaction, inappreciable to us, which is really taking place in every living body, though apparently devoid of life, was well known to Clifford. When this was accomplished, he rose and examined the rocks above him with great care. Here he soon discerned, as he expected, the purple flowers of the poisonous digitalis, but clinging to the face of the rock at such a height as made it perilous to attempt them. Nevertheless, by a little ingenuity he contrived to bring down one of the plants, and then from time to time so presented the flowers, that the unconscious stranger, if the feeblest sensibility or the lightest breath remained, might inhale or perceive ever so faintly their sickening and potent perfume. In fine, he took her exquisite hands, whiter and colder than snow, in his own, glowing and warm, despite his recent plunge, and her chilling contact.

Nor were these efforts unsuccessful. There was, at length, a pulsation; then he became sensible that she breathed; the lips reddened; there was a soft sigh. Clifford watched her countenance with a sort of radiant attention; and as he bent over her, himself so ideally beautiful, so powerful, and so tranquil in his knowledge, you might, without any very violent effort of imagination, have thought of the angel that bent under the Shaping Hand, while the yet unanimated ancestress of all living lay, motionless as marble, and whiter than snow, on some violet bank of Paradise; so softly, too, shone forth that same tenderest aspect of the Archetypal Nature in this unconscious maid, on whom the tide of animation was now returning from its recent and alarming ebb with such visible rapidity.

A pair of large and soft dark eyes had opened, as the stars first appear in the sky, ere he was aware. The lady scanned the noble visage of her preserver as in a dream. She could hardly be conscious, at the moment, of any thing but the vague fact that her life had been saved from a peril that she scarcely yet recalled, by a being who looked fit to be one of her guardian angels. Whether any thought of this kind was in her mind, or if, through the bright haze of partial consciousness, she believed him to be really a denizen of some more perfect world, can not be said; but, at all events, her glance was very expressive of tender and admiring trust. Neither can we give here a clear account of what was passing in Clifford's mind; but that which he did was to bend down, and gently kiss the still pale cheek of the fair young creature he had saved.

"Fear nothing, dear Signorina," he said, in

the language which he thought most likely to be hers. "You are as with a brother."

"I am sure of it," faintly murmured the stranger, in the sweet words of the same language, in which it is so beautiful, sometimes, that the adjectives express the sex of the speaker. She seemed now quite mistress of herself. She closed her eyes, and breathed, almost inaudibly, some words of thanksgiving, in language taken from the English Psalter.

"Have I been so happy as to save the life of a countrywoman?" said Clifford with emotion, and using his country's tongue.

"English too?" said the beautiful unknown. Her dark eyes grew darker and softer every minute.

"What shall I do for you more?" said Clifford. "Shall I call your friends, if, as I suppose, it is their voices that I have heard not very distant?"

"Oh, by no means," replied the young girl instantly, with alarm. "If I could manage so that they might not even find out what has happened!"

She was still enveloped helplessly, and almost without the power of stirring, in his cloak. Clifford took her in his arms as if she had been an infant. He bore her through the shallow water to the neighboring recess, where he had observed marks of occupation, and which he rightly conjectured to have been occupied by her. It was a sunny, sheltered nook. A huge white umbrella, with a long handle, such as artists use in sketching, to keep off the sun, was spread out toward the water, evidently to protect the young bather from observation in the inevitable toilet. Articles of feminine attire of an exquisite neatness, were disposed on a flat rock that served as a dressing-table. Here was also a box of colors, with a half-finished drawing resting against the open lid. An artist's stool, with a seat of embroidery, stood against the rock, and on this Clifford now seated his trembling burthen.

"Are you quite fit to dress yourself?" said Clifford, tenderly. "You are so very young that you might accept my assistance."

"I don't need any, thank you!" She glanced round with a sort of frightened desperation, and looked extremely as if she were going to swoon. "What time is it?" she asked, quickly; "my watch is on the shawl."

It was one of the most diminutive watches that ever were seen, and had a Venetian chain. By it lay (nothing escaped Clifford) an ivory comb, the back of which was carved in a delicate bas-relief of the hours, with a minute legend.

"Twenty minutes to eight."

"Oh, I shall have time!" Her color came back again. "They are not to come till eight. They will suppose that I am drawing."

"I shall stay within hearing of your faintest call," said Clifford, as he withdrew.

Clifford leaned against the rock, with folded arms, and looked abstractedly over the blue gulf spread before him, and at its purple boundary of mountains, while this youthful and innocent toilet was made.

"I am quite ready now, if you please," said at last a tremulous, sweet voice.

She appeared, now that she was in her ordi-

nary dress, even more decidedly youthful than before. If almost a woman in her slight exquisite form, girlhood lingered unequivocally in her face, and in her glance of winning trust.

"In two minutes they will be here," she said. "It seems so ungrateful to send you away."

Clifford did not offer to repeat the fraternal familiarity on which he had ventured at her first revival beneath his care.

"May I ask your name?" he said, taking the hand she extended in adieu.

"I am called," she replied, and hesitated—then added, "ALICE STUART."

"I shall not claim to know you by that name, till I have in another way obtained the right," rejoined Clifford, "but it will be a clew. I need no other."

He was going, but she said, blushing, and in a very ingenuous manner, "I shall want to know *your* name too, of course."

He mentioned it, and was gone in an instant. We shall stay with Alice Stuart.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a fracas of voices giving orders in Italian, and of oars backing water, and the stern of a barge came slowly in sight. Two ladies and a gentleman were seated beneath the awning; the latter with his back to the shore.

"She is ready," said one of the ladies.

The gentleman rose, and turning, said, "I hope we have not kept you waiting, Lady Alice?"

It was a man between thirty-five and forty, with a countenance indicative of intelligence and positiveness. He spoke in a clear, manly voice, with a slight Irish accent.

"Not one minute, I assure you, my dear Dr. Macpherson," replied Lady Alice, advancing somewhat unsteadily. She managed, however, to gain a broad stone against which the boat rested, and to catch the proffered hand.

"I was afraid we had," continued the gentleman, as he handed her in. "For Mrs. Macpherson tells me you disappeared after the first ten minutes this morning. But I suppose, as you had your sketch to finish, you have been able to amuse yourself."

"Really I have not touched my sketch this morning," said Lady Alice.

"I am afraid then you have disobeyed my injunctions," said the doctor, smiling and shaking his head. "I must tell you, for the hundredth time, that cold bathing—especially sea-bathing is a powerful sedative, and can not be prolonged beyond a certain point without injuriously depressing the vital energies. It is true that at present you have a great deal of color, as I see Mrs. Macpherson and Helen are going to remark, but that may be febrile reaction."

There were two children in the boat, with fair round English faces, fresh from the recent bath. There was also a lady's maid who went ashore to fetch "her ladyship's things." This important affair accomplished, the barge put off again in the same direction from which it had approached. Four savage Amalfitani, with brawny arms and legs, handled the oars.

"Pray, Lady Alice," continued Dr. Macpher-

son, "did you hear or see any thing of a boat after quitting the water this morning? Mrs. Macpherson and Helen say they heard oars which first approached, and then retired toward Vietri."

"We couldn't see any thing," observed Helen, "but thought you might, and that perhaps you would be disturbed."

"No boat from Vietri ever comes so far as this," said the doctor. "It must have been the oars of this barge that you heard."

"How absurd!" said his wife; "as if we could have heard *them* so plainly."

"Over the water, sounds are very deceptive."

"Mrs. Macpherson's ears did not deceive her in this instance," said Lady Alice, quietly, "as I saw a boat come in and then retire."

"I was sure of it," said the lady, triumphantly.

"Were not you frightened?" said Helen.

"Yes, I was," said Alice. "I thought, as Dr. Macpherson says, that no boats ever came here."

"Nor do they," said the doctor. "'Tis an exception that proves the rule; and, as you mentioned, as soon as they saw you, they retired immediately."

"I beg pardon," said Lady Alice, "but that is not exactly what I said."

"No," replied the doctor, "but that is the way it happened, you may rely on it. I don't like the people here; but I must do them the justice to say, that they are very scrupulous in respecting any spot of the coast that they see to be occupied by ladies or females of any rank."

Here Lady Alice, whether from the too sedative influence of her bath, or from the febrile re-action, of which the learned doctor had spoken, being carried too far, suddenly fainted. This created an extreme sensation; but while her friends are busy in trying to recover her, we shall leave her to their kind and skillful care, and explain how this affair came to happen at all in the way it did.

Lady Alice (and who Lady Alice was, shall be stated in a proper place) was generally accompanied on these occasions by her maid—a French maid of course—a young girl of about her own age. But this morning, as it happened, Mademoiselle Clairvoix had been dispatched to Naples, with her mistress's keys and orders to cause a certain carriage to be unpacked and every case it contained ransacked, if necessary, for a particular article which the young lady fancied she indispensably required. Thus, and because Lady Alice absolutely, perhaps willfully, refused any other attendant, it happened that (the proximity of Mrs. Macpherson and Helen excepted) she was alone.

This mistress and maid had been wont to consider the whole of the quiet cove into which Clifford that morning intruded, as effectually cut off from the open bay, and practically as safe from intrusion as if it had been walled in. Lady Alice had made sketches from every point of it; she had exulted in the feat of swimming across its calm and sheltered waters, nearly embraced by the curvature of the rocky shore; and at the moment when the intrusive boat broke its silence by the dashing oars and prow, she was actually reposing after such an exertion on a rock lying just within the point which formed its opposite

limit. Her consternation was extreme to behold a young man, as in the Arabian Tales, leap out and take possession of a spot so near her own dressing-place, and cutting off her retreat to it.

It was in the rash attempt to regain it ere the invader could be ready to enter the water—an attempt that her modesty rendered imperative—that her strength failed, or the terror of not succeeding paralyzed her. Though conscious that she was sinking, it may be doubted whether she would have claimed his aid by that faint shriek, had she not in the moment of her agonized helplessness observed him devoutly kiss the jeweled reliquary which he took from his bosom. This mark of piety inspired her with an instinctive confidence, the grounds of which she had no time to canvass. She called faintly for help, and swooning, as persons generally do when they drown, sank.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. MACPHERSON'S villa stood on the highest point of the green promontory, at the foot of which had taken place the scenes described in the second and third chapters of this book. In front, and far beneath, rolled the bay; in the rear, two finely-wooded valleys ran up into the bosom of the peninsula, offering here and there patches of culture—a platform of maize, or a vine-clad slope. Wild eagles soared round the inaccessible heights that closed in and overhung this sylvan background.

A fortnight had elapsed, and the two Cliffords were now, in the cool of the afternoon, approaching the house, after a ride of an hour and a half over the hills.

Its external appearance was rude. The brothers entered a dilapidated court, overlooked by few windows, and of which the prison-like walls were encrusted with a cement as hard as stone. They were then ushered up a naked staircase of the same material. Only when they entered the apartments actually tenanted by the family, did they begin to see traces of comfort and even of a certain extempore elegance.

"A cheerful room!" said Augustus, as they were left by the servant in the saloon.

A divan of striped calico, blue and white, ran round the apartment, which was floored with a brilliant tile of white and pink. In the center was a table on which lay some richly-bound volumes, and an open portfolio of drawings. Clifford took up one of the volumes, and turned to the leaf where the name of the owner is usually to be found;—it was inscribed, "To Helen—from Alice Stuart."

Augustus, who was a great connoisseur, had seized upon the portfolio, and now invited his brother to look at some of the drawings, which he assured him were uncommonly fine.

"They are hers," thought Frederick.

"The work of a professional artist, doubtless," said Augustus.

"That is possible, too," thought Frederick.

Frederick Clifford was not a man to be long baffled in a pursuit that interested him, although from motives of delicacy he refrained from using the clew he possessed in the name and beauty of

Alice, and confined himself to the slighter indication afforded by Dr. Macpherson's agreeable Celtic intonation, which had not escaped his quick ear when that gentleman was giving orders to his boatmen. He ascertained in a few days that an Irish physician, a resident of Naples—his brother's physician in fact—was spending the summer on the coast with his family; and Augustus could inform him, that in the latter was included a young lady, his sister-in-law—a Miss Stewart. But Dr. Macpherson had then gone off on a boating excursion round the peninsula, to be absent a week; and it was at the earliest possible date after his return that the brothers were now making their first call.

Mrs. Macpherson presently appeared in the drawing-room, to deplore her husband's temporary absence, to promise his speedy return, and in the meantime to welcome both brothers in his name with a degree of over-earnest (what might be called fussy) cordiality. Frederick said, that the disparity between members of the same family was often immense. But when Helen Stewart came in, and was introduced by her sister, he quite lost his very remarkable self-possession; stared, absolutely reddened, and replied stammeringly and *mal-à-propos* to the queries with which Mrs. Macpherson courteously plied him. Our friend had indeed rather hastily identified his Vietri heroine as the sister of Mrs. Macpherson. It was however certain, as he now reflected, recovering from his first discomfiture, that she was a friend of the family, if not a relative. A third sister? Hardly possible. He remembered the books and drawings.

"Some one is very fond of sketching, by what I see here," he observed as soon as Mrs. Macpherson gave him an opportunity.

"Yes, I sketch a little, and Helen a great deal. Most of those are hers. You draw, Mr. Clifford?"

"Not too well. But pray who did this?" And he took up one of those which Augustus had so much admired.

"Oh, Lady Alice Stuart did that. She is quite an artist. She made several sketches for Helen and me."

"What—Lady Alice Stuart is that?" asked Frederick, careful not to take his eyes off the drawing.

"The daughter of the Duke of Lennox, you know," said the lady. "She came here with us for the sea-bathing, which, perhaps you are aware, is singularly fine. Dr. Macpherson attended Lady Edith in Naples. They pretend to say that we are somehow related, which is very good of them, you know. All Stewarts are one stock originally, I believe; but this is through Cluny."

"Scottish consanguinity is a proverb," said Clifford. "It is late for them to be in Naples," he added, with a *nonchalant* air. "Are they there still?"

"Not in Naples since the first of June," said the lady, "but at Ischia. Dr. Macpherson sent Lady Edith there for the waters. The duchess went with her; and Lady Alice, who could not well be taken to Ischia, came to us. She was with us a month, quite domesticated. But you asked if they were still in Naples, that is, in the neighborhood. They are not. They sailed for

Genoa the day before yesterday. We took Lady Alice round to them by sea ten days ago."

Here the entrance of Dr. Macpherson changed the conversation, and gave Clifford an opportunity for meditation. He did not know too much about this ducal house, which must not be confounded with that of Lenox-Richmond. He resolved to exhaust the information of the Macphersons, which he saw would not be difficult. Augustus and the doctor were soon engaged in an argument about the Italians, whom the former warmly defended. Mrs. Macpherson disappeared on an intimation of tea; Frederick easily drew on Miss Stewart to talk of Lady Alice.

Lady Alice was not in delicate health. No one's health was ever so good. She bathed entirely for recreation. She was fond of such amusements. Sometimes Miss Stewart thought she was a Naiad, at other times a Dryad; for she was equally at home in woods and waters. Miss Stewart was very willing to talk of their guest. She admitted that Lady Alice was a little willful; spirited almost to excess, considering her sex and extreme youth, yet as shy as possible in some respects. Her mother, she dared say he had heard, had been a Di Vernon. The Duke saved her life at a hunt, which was the beginning of her attachment to him. She had said she would never marry a Presbyterian, and the Dukes of Lennox had always been that; but in two months after this they were married.

Frederick gave Miss Stewart a look, beaming with admiration and gratitude. He inquired, with some effusion of interest, if the children of the duchess were Presbyterians.

"Oh no indeed!"—Miss Stewart was surprised that Mr. Clifford knew so little about the family. They belonged to the Established Church of England, and something more. In fact, the family were well known to favor Puseyism. Lady Alice was almost a Catholic, and she feared (she begged his pardon) that she would go over to the Roman Catholic Church one of these days. Frederick colored, and Miss Stewart, fearing that she might have transgressed by alluding to his faith, stopped.

"I knew her brother, Lord Stratherne, very well," he said, not wishing to change the subject. "Is he married yet?"

"You don't mean the *late* Lord Stratherne, surely?" said Miss Stewart.

"Is he dead?" said Clifford, looking shocked.

"Lady Edith's brother is dead. Is it possible you did not know it? And yet you knew him. He died more than a year—yes, eighteen months ago."

"I have been away from England, and indeed from Europe, for several years," said Clifford; "I am a good deal behind-hand."

"Why, so you must be. Then you don't know, of course, that Lord Stratherne left his whole fortune to Lady Alice?"

"No, I certainly did not know it," said Clifford, changing color.

"With all the accumulations of his long minority," pursued Miss Stewart. "She is the greatest heiress in England; and, by her brother's wish, she is to marry Lord Wessex."

"They were very intimate, I remember," said Frederick, with great indifference.

"Bosom friends," said Miss Stewart. "And no doubt the family of Lady Alice wish it very much. The Marquis is a splendid *parti*, of course, and she is such an heiress, and so very young! Every handsome dandy will be throwing himself in her way. They keep her in great retirement, on that account; and the duchess wished her to come here partly for that reason, because here she would see nobody. We were even careful not to let any one know that she was with us; lest some of the adventurers, who, they say, are always hovering in their train, should hear of it and come down. That would have been very disagreeable."

"Very," said Frederick, crimsoning, and with some hauteur. Miss Stewart suddenly recollected that he was a younger son and excessively handsome. She also colored and was silent. Frederick wondered at some people's want of tact. At last he asked abruptly, "How old is Lady Alice Stuart?"

"She was seventeen in May," said Miss Stewart, timidly.

CHAPTER V.

THE Duke of Lennox was a descendant of Robert III., king of Scotland, whose ancestors, by royal gifts, their own swords, and fortunate marriages, had acquired vast estates as well in England as in the kingdom of whose once royal race they had become the sole direct representatives. At the age of twenty-two, Charles Ludovic Stuart, being presumptive heir to the Scottish estates and all the honors of his house, married the Lady Mary Stuart, his cousin, whose birth had originally threatened the loss of half his vast inheritance. It was a marriage of affection as well as family policy. They had been affianced from their childhood; they were married the day that Lady Mary completed her seventeenth year; within a year their happiness was crowned by the birth of a son; the old duke died of the joy caused by this auspicious event; and, with the exception of one estate settled on his daughter at her marriage, left to his son-in-law every thing of which he might have disposed.

The young Duchess of Lennox was a type of the beauty for which the females of her house have been remarkable. Especially after her confinement the transparent clearness of complexion natural to women at this period was conspicuous, and was relieved by a delicate carnation that harmonized with her refined features. Her deep mourning enhanced this interesting beauty. Her husband had never loved her so much; their first moon, though sweet to the end, could not compare with their present bliss, which the loss of an aged father, gathered to his fathers in the fullness of years and gratified hopes, chastened rather than disturbed.

The young duchess had taken cold during her confinement—a common occurrence; and the cold left a slight cough which lasted a month or two, then yielded, as the family physician thought, to judicious remedies. In fact, it had yielded to the influence which pregnancy is well known to exercise over pulmonary irritation.

Her grace's youth was thought to forbid her fulfilling the sweetest duty of maternity, and she yet wanted some months of nineteen, when she became a second time a mother. Another cold!—a recurrence of the cough!—a pulse of one hundred and twenty beats in the minute! The family physician desired to consult his brethren. The duke was advised to take her grace to Italy. At Rome, a few months after the birth of a second daughter, the remains of child and mother were laid, by her own request, in the same grave, close to the pyramid of Caius Cestius. On the monument which her husband caused to be erected to her memory, it was recorded, after mention of her birth, inheritances, marriage, and titles, that she died "Aged 20 years."

It was to be expected the Duke of Lennox would marry again. Three years elapsed, and he appeared once more in society, evidently with the intention of contracting a new alliance. He was extremely moderate in the qualifications that he required in his future wife. They were only blood, beauty, goodness, and health! He was at——House one evening when the Countess of Excester and Lady Katherine Courtenay were announced.

"The best blood in England," murmured the duke to himself; "but I dare say an old maid, or plain, or, perhaps, a bad constitution." Still he stopped to look at her.

"The most beautiful girl in England!" he internally exclaimed as she passed him.

She might have been turned of nineteen, was attired in the classic costume which still lingered in Britain, and which set off to great advantage the figure of a grace, and the countenance of a muse. By her rich, sun-smitten cheek she might have been a wood-nymph. She smiled as she passed the duke, not with her lips, though breathing sweetness mixed with malice, but with her dark, speaking eye.

Lady Kate boasted, with equal wit and truth, that as many as had wished to marry her (she had been out a whole year) no man had offered to do so; and "He comes too near who comes to be denied," was a maxim that she wittily applied to honorable love. As for the Duke of Lennox, she immediately said to those who she knew would repeat it to him, that she had quite made up her mind on three points: she never would marry a Scot, a widower, or a Presbyterian. His grace was all three; but he was a man of national pertinacity; he was passionately in love for the first time; and he was only eight-and-twenty. He had the nerve to propose to Lady Kate, who crimsoned and refused him in the most charming manner in the world. After that she forbore to rally him. She seemed a little afraid of the Duke of Lennox, and he got the Excesters, in the autumn, to visit him, with their daughter, at his Highland castle, where he got up stag-hunts on a magnificent scale, for the amusement of Lady Kate, who was passionately fond of the chase. The first run they had, the duke saved her life. They were separated from their company, and rode home together.

"I will marry you," said Lady Kate, blushing and trembling on her spirited hunter.

"Not for the world would I take advantage of a generous gratitude," said the duke.

"I shall never marry any body out of gratitude, I do assure you," said Lady Kate.

"Ah, could I believe what that seems to imply—"

"I think you are really not Scotch," said Lady Kate, between a blush and a smile.

"No, I was born in London."

"I had a virgin heart to give," said Lady Kate, looking him courageously in the face. "Yours, by the purest tie of affection, has belonged to another. Was I too proud to think, as I did, that the exchange was not an equal one?"

"Not at all too proud."

"My other objection, of which you heard, is one of principle though," continued Lady Kate. "How can I waive it, even now?"

"You object, on principle, to marrying a member of the Established Church of Scotland," said the duke meditatively, and making his horse walk.

"It depends whether your grace objects, on principle, to your children being bred members of the Established Church of England. If I became a mother," continued the young lady, with great animation and a glowing cheek, "the religious nurture of my children would be in my eyes a sacred duty that I could never abandon to another; and plainly, I could not and would not teach them the tenets of your confession."

"It is strongly Calvinistic," said the duke, a little confused. "I suppose you don't like that."

"I don't know what that precisely means, but I understand very well the difference between the Church catechism and the Assembly's, which lately I have been studying," said the lady, with a faint embarrassment. "'Tis a question whether we are to be taught, as soon as we can speak, that we are children of God, or children of the Devil, to speak plainly; and that must, it seems to me, make all the difference in the world to a mother."

"And this scruple prevented you from accepting my hand when you really—loved me?" said the duke, in a deeply gratified tone, while they both drew up for a moment beneath a spreading tree.

"It did."

"Could I hope that you would ever become the mother of a child of mine, I would agree, dear Kate, to your teaching it any religion you like."

It is self-evident that this conversation decided two questions most materially affecting the heroine of this tale:—first, whether she should exist at all; secondly, how she should be educated after she had been brought into the world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHILDHOOD OF LADY ALICE.

I. On the south coast of Devon there is an amphitheater of green hills rising round the shore of a beautiful bay, and backed far inland by one elevation which might almost deserve to be called a mountain, bold and picturesque, and crowned by a savage Tor, where mist drifts and clouds hang, and summer lightning breaks; or sometimes, like a ruin of old time, it rises gray and naked against a serene sky.

The whole region is richly wooded, with a surprising quantity of evergreens and exotic trees, whose growth is fostered by the mild, moist air of Devonshire; and among these, a group of noble cedars of Lebanon could never pass unobserved by the eye that looked down upon the scene from the overhanging height, where the winding and ascending road enters the district. From this point might also be discerned the glitter of a distant cascade, one of a series of beautiful waterfalls, adorning a green and wooded valley running up into the bosom of the hills. But a more striking object still, is a stately edifice of the early Tudor architecture, and built of a white sparkling stone that abounds in the neighboring quarries, but now mellowed by time and stained by weather, to a richer, yet uniform tint. It is of great extent; stands in an eminent position, in the center of the vast and sylvan domain; is surrounded by terraced gardens; its lines of mullioned windows, its rich oriels, picturesque gables, shadowy turrets, its battlements, pinnacles, and chimneys, finely relieved against its green background of hills.

This princely residence is the property of the Duke of Lennox; and the cultivated valleys and pastoral hills for miles in every direction, with the small sea-port town of St. Walerie, from which the house takes its name, acknowledge him as their lord. Everywhere in the beautiful drives, and more beautiful rides, you encounter the picturesque cottages of Devonshire, standing in their ancient garden-plats, sheltered with fruit-trees, and gay with flowers. Except in the village of St. Walerie, you would hardly find a house in the district of a later date than the reign of Henry VIII., and some were vastly older. The increasing exceptions are the new cottages built by the present duke, in which the style of the more ancient tenements is carefully preserved, while the health and comfort of the inmates are consulted, in the introduction of many a modern convenience.

In a drawing-room of St. Walerie, the Duchess of Lennox, about eleven years after her marriage, was playing with the loveliest child of eight summers, with a seraphic head and golden ringlets. The duchess had several other children; her eldest son was absent on a visit to his maternal relatives; the younger children had at this hour (for tea was being dispensed in the drawing-room), passed under the care of nursery maids. The duke was talking to the Rev. Herbert Courtenay, a brother of the duchess, the Rector of St. Walerie, and unmarried, their only guest. Lord Stratherne, the duke's son by his first marriage, was at Eton; Lady Edith, his sister, had that evening disappeared before her father and uncle came in. Mr. Courtenay lived chiefly at St. Walerie House, and was its acting chaplain; the duke and he disputed perpetually on theological subjects, though in the most amicable spirit. Such was the topic on which they were now engaged; and as soon as the reluctant Lady Alice was taken away, after the sweet et-ceteras of a child's good night, the duchess took part in the conversation, and pressed upon the duke an instance which she thought her brother feebly urged.

"There have been always instances of early piety," said her husband, "and doubtless Edith is no exception. In such cases much is due to a charac-

ter happily balanced, and much also to the influence of divine grace."

"Which she received in baptism and has never forfeited," said Herbert.

"So I hear you say. But we shall see how your system works with Alice. That little gipsy will put your theories to a severe test, or I am much mistaken. She is not like Edith."

"I wonder what has become of this young saint, for whom grace and nature have both done so much," said the duchess, looking at her watch. "Bless me, she has been away this hour and a half. I must go and see what is the matter."

While the duchess was gone on this errand, the duke occupied himself with examining a pretty though inexperienced drawing by the little Alice, who had evinced a singularly precocious talent for design, and he hardly looked up when his wife re-entered the room. The duchess was extremely pale.

"Is Edith ill?"

"Charles! Edith has eloped!"

II. A sister of Lady Excester's, and of course, the maternal aunt of the Duchess of Lennox, was married to Mr. D'Eyncourt of D'Eyncourt, Bucks; one of the oldest families in the kingdom, great barons in the time of Rufus, and great proprietors still, with a name nobler than a coronet. On a Christmas at St. Walerie, three years before, George D'Eyncourt, the heir and only son of the D'Eyncourts of D'Eyncourt, had fallen desperately in love with Edith Stuart, then only thirteen. Such a passion is necessarily a very pure sentiment; a young man really corrupted could hardly feel it. D'Eyncourt, a handsome, dissipated guardsman, still in his teens, compared himself with Edith, and was shocked at the difference. He resolved to reform, and he kept his resolution.

D'Eyncourt was not allowed to correspond with Lady Edith, very naturally; but by sending presents to his "cousins," among whom he included her, to whom he was not related in the most remote degree, he contrived to keep alive in her mind the memory of his admiration; and after two years, during which the duke had managed that they should not meet, Captain D'Eyncourt, having got leave in August, to go to the moors, came to Strathsay on his own invitation, to see his "cousins."

The early maturity of Edith, which alarmed her father, made it very difficult to keep her in the nursery; and her friendship with her step-mother made such a seclusion impossible. A duke's daughter, with a fine fortune secured by the terms of her mother's marriage settlement; beautiful to boot; good—almost too good for this world; could not want suitors. But the young guardsman, who was now just of age, had the advantage of pre-occupying her imagination, with an idea to which it was extremely assailable. Others might admire and love Edith; but the love of her, yet a mere child, had saved him. What could Edith do but love one who owed her a debt so sacred; to whom she must be so much more dear than she ever could be to any one else, and by whom, as D'Eyncourt told her, she was so revered? But her father looked upon an early marriage as a death-warrant for this darling child—and though he approved this connection highly in every other point of view,

he resolved to stave off an engagement as long as possible. "They may make what promises they like to each other," said the duke, "I shall recognize no engagement as binding on Edith, till she has completed her eighteenth year."

"We may make what promises we like to each other," said the self-willed inheritor of twenty manors. "Let us, then, Edith, betroth ourselves in the form of a Scotch marriage. Then, assured of your fidelity, because you will be my wife, I can wait with calmness till your father is pleased to give his consent."

In fine, D'Eyncourt's apprehension that the duke would try to dissolve the engagement altogether, in order to form for Edith a more dazzling alliance, and Edith's persuasion of her parents' real approbation of her attachment, led the lovers to unite in so very imprudent an action, of which Edith, at fifteen, did not comprehend very clearly all the consequences. It was the day before her lover's leave expired, when her heart was softened by his approaching departure, that she was prevailed upon, sorely against her conscience, though she deemed it a not very important step, to comply with his wishes. In the presence of Edith's foster-sister and attendant from infancy—a Highland girl of the duke's clan, and of an old family servant of the D'Eyncourts (these necessary personages are never wanting at the right moment)—the lovers espoused themselves to each other in the words of the marriage service. D'Eyncourt placed the ring on Edith's finger, and saluted her as his wife.

It happened that the very next day, after D'Eyncourt's departure, *à-propos* to an elopement in high life, the Scotch law of marriage was discussed. An Ex-Lord Chancellor, who was the duke's guest, explained the law with great clearness, and ended by saying—"In short, parties between whom such a ceremony has passed are as much married as the Duke and Duchess of Lennox."

"Hear, hear!" said the duke, with a laugh.

"Lord E— was himself married at Gretna Green, Edith," said the duchess.

Lady Edith made no comment, but the impression that sank deep in her mind was, that she and George were as much married "as papa and mamma."

III. In the last days of December the lovers met again at St. Walerie. This time, D'Eyncourt was invited. There was a flock of Courtenays, Herberts, and D'Eyncourts;—a family party. It was extremely gay at Royal St. Walerie, but she who was gayest, and caused most gaiety in others, was its mistress. The house was like some palace of Solomon at the Feast of Tabernacles, which foreshadowed, as Christmas commemorates, the coming of the Word to tabernacle in our flesh.

There was a chapel which had remained unaltered since the time of the last Lord St. Walerie, who was a Roman Catholic. It was a peculiar and exempt jurisdiction, endowed with many singular privileges, and in which many singular customs had been religiously preserved even under the Presbyterian dukes. It was now beautifully dressed with evergreens intermingled with living flowers, and now and then in a deep niche of holly, an exotic tree with odorous blossoms and nodding golden fruit. The

ancient altar of stone, ascended by steps of the same material, had a front embroidered, by Edith, with gold and colors on white silk, its altar-cloth of crimson velvet not less richly wrought, and its pall of fine linen and lace. Its six massive candlesticks of silver still remained, and were filled with huge wax candles ever lighted at the hour of service. The duke, indeed, held lands on condition that this was not omitted. A grand painting of the Nativity—a master-piece of Cignani, and the pride of St. Walerie, was the altar-piece. Here, night and morning, entered in solemn procession a youthful choir, stoled and surpliced, and preceded by cross, thurible, and lights. Here matins and even-song were chanted, and the prayers intoned by Herbert Courtenay, who had a genius for music and a passion for that of the Church. These beautiful services chastened the gayeties of the house, but certainly deepened the general enjoyment.

It must be confessed that D'Eyncourt came down to St. Walerie with some wild wishes, struggling in his breast with a sense of honor, and the deep respect which the innocence of Edith inspired. But nothing could be more foreign to the dark excitement of clandestine intercourse than the spirit of affectionate gayety which the Duchess of Lennox diffused, by contagious sympathy, over the circle gathered round her Christmas hearth. The beautiful worship, too, that sanctified the household, and daily recalled the sacred meaning of the season, awed his spirit and elevated his thoughts. Edith's voice, in chant, anthem, and hymn, was the greatest musical interest of the chapel to all; but how much more to him who alone knew her to be his virgin wife! She became a sort of sacred being in his eyes, and when they were alone, as would sometimes happen, the most scrupulous mother could not have imposed upon him a conduct more delicately reserved than his. Edith, who had strangely trembled at his coming, reassured by his timid demeanor, yielded herself without fear to her guileless affection. There was not a feeling in her heart to cause her shame, but also there was not one that was not devoted to him. But this was too good to last, unless D'Eyncourt as well as Edith had been an angel indeed.

IV. Edith's birth-day fell on Twelfth-day, and was to be celebrated by a brilliant ball, to which the county were invited. This year, as it happened, Epiphany was a Sunday, so that the ball could not take place strictly on Twelfth-night, but the night after.

"So you are only sixteen, Twelfth-night!" D'Eyncourt had said this a hundred times, and Edith had generally replied, as she now did, "I wish it were eighteen for your sake."

"Your father says he won't consent to your marrying till you are twenty. Four years! Why, 'tis a life-time. The bloom of our youth will be gone!"

"Do you think so?"—Edith blushed.

"We might be so happy in those four years. And in so long a time how many things may happen to both of us. If you are too young to marry, Edith, you are not too young to die."

"That is very true, George; it is what we ought always to remember."

"I did not mean it in that point of view," said

D'Eyncourt, biting his lip. "But if such a misfortune should ever befall me, I should regret to my own dying day all the years that we had lived apart."

"Certainly it is hard for you," said Edith, pitying her lover almost unconsciously, as the idea now rose before her of possibly dying even before they should have lived otherwise than apart.

"And I, perhaps, shall not be as good four years hence as I am now. I don't mean that I am any better now than I should be, or so good; but temptation takes a thousand forms in the world I live in, so that it is a thousand to one if I escape them all."

"If you are afraid of temptation," said Edith, fixing her blue eyes candidly upon his, "you should seek to strengthen yourself against it."

"How?"

"You have been confirmed?"

"Yes."

"And made your first communion afterward, I know."

"Well?"

"Why not renew it? Why neglect now that means of grace?"

"Well, I can't say," said D'Eyncourt, evasively, "that I am much tempted since I have loved you, Edith. You are my guardian angel. All I want is to have you always at my side."

"True strength, dear George, comes from a higher source."

"What a little saint it is!" thought D'Eyncourt.

"Epiphany morning," pursued Edith, "there will be an early communion in the chapel on my account, because it is my birth-day; and Lady Excester, and mamma, and Blanche Courtenay, are to receive with me. They are not my blood-relations at all."

"And not your father?" said D'Eyncourt, replying to her thought.

"Nor my husband," said Edith, looking at him, and speaking in a very low voice.

"For that word's sake, dearest Edith, I will be there."

Which happened accordingly. Before the day arrived, D'Eyncourt had several interviews with Herbert Courtenay; and Epiphany morning, at the day-break service, when Edith drew near the altar with her mother, her young husband knelt by her side. And on the morrow, the flowers and lights are in all the palace of that princely race, to mimic on a northern night the sunshine and fragrance of a tropical noon; while the saloons are filled with a brilliant throng, little mindful of those matin sanctities, but intent to participate with what is, after all, a part of our nature, in the joy of a mysterious commemoration. For if worship be the union of man with his Maker, pleasure, rightly understood, is a bond of humble sympathy with our own kind. And in this sense, as there is a time to pray, so there is a time to dance.

In her enchanting ball-dress, Edith rests a white-gloved hand on D'Eyncourt's shoulder; and she is young enough to be pleased with his uniform, which he becomes. His hand clasps a slender, rounded waist. This is before all the world; yet she looks in his face with the most unembarrassed smile:—in a moment they

are whirling among the waltzers.—"God has made every thing beautiful in his time."

Perhaps, also, we shall be inclined to smile, and say, "we thought so," when we observe them resting in the curtained embrasure of a window, and perceive that D'Eyncourt does not relinquish his partner's waist, which makes Edith blush, though she permits it. In fact, that stolen contact has a charm for both, which the same thing has not before the world. Edith plays with her pretty handkerchief, and shakes out, but very gently, its perfumed folds. She does not like to stir too much, and the pressure of that trembling hand grows bolder every minute. They circle once more round the spacious chamber, and then they pause once more in their window to rest. How very natural!

But the Lady Edith must not be suffered to go on so, and on the night of the fête, too: her father must interfere, if her step-mother will not; and, lo! the duke is approaching, just as matters are becoming critical, to raise the siege of this fair fortress. His grace brings up a reinforcement that seems very like to accomplish this design, in the shape of a youthful hero, with a distinguished cravat, and the air of a conqueror.

"The Marquis of Wessex, Edith, is in the same form at Eton with your brother, and tells me that Ludovic and he are very great friends."

"My dear George," said the duchess, with a very irritating look of a suppressed inclination to laugh, "you must not stand here, looking so miserably jealous. Every body will be laughing at you. Have you so little confidence in Edith's affection?"

"I am not jealous of Edith's affection, but of the admiration of others, so openly expressed for one whom I consider the same as my wife."

"Oh! upon my word! Excuse me, George, but you are too absurd even for a lover. If she were really your wife, you should not make such a fool of yourself. I declare that if I were a man, I would make love to her myself on purpose to plague you. Why, that is why we have determined to bring her out—that she may have serious suitors—and make a free choice. And, you silly boy, it is a great deal better for you that it should be so. Her constancy (of which I entertain not the slightest doubt) will be so much more flattering. Come, let us see if she will be as uneasy about you. Here is a pretty girl—the prettiest in Devon; they say—that I want you to dance with. They are forming the quadrille, and you shall be vis-à-vis to Lord Wessex and Edith, and show the greatest indifference all the while he is making love to her."

But if D'Eyncourt is jealous, Edith is ashamed and distressed. To laugh at the practiced society manner of so very young a man and an Etonian, and to accept his admiration as an incense to her vanity, are alike foreign to a character of so simple truth.

"How sorry I ought to be that you are brought out to-night, Lady Edith."

"Why sorry?"

"Why, indeed? since if you had not been I should have missed the pleasure of dancing with you; but to think of all the balls that you will grace, where, alas! I shall not have that pleasure!"

"Are you so fond of dancing?"

"By no means. It is the partner that I am so charmed with."

"You seem to be making love to me."

"That is because I can't help it."

"Don't you know that I am engaged to be married?"

"At sixteen? You jest."

"I was never more serious. So you must not fall in love with me, mind."

"You spoke too late," said her partner, with vivacity. "I am more in love now than ever."

"It is you who are too late. But I'll tell you," she added, maliciously, "who will suit you vastly better. That's my sister Alice."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Lord Wessex, coloring half with resentment. "She is in arms, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, indeed. She is eight years and a half old. You shall see her to-morrow morning. It is the most perfect little fairy. Did Ludovic never tell you?"

They became very gay on this topic; but as Lord Wessex was leading her mother to the supper-room, he asked—"Pray, duchess, who is Lady Edith engaged to be married to?"

Here were some causes to develop reflection in both these secretly-wedded lovers, and to lead ultimately to resolutions. The father of Edith was displeased with her, even on her birthday fête, for having said to Lord Wessex that she was engaged, and Edith felt that less she could not innocently have done than to tell him that. Then, if this secret were maintained, she constantly ran the risk of doing harm to others; she exposed her own innocence. D'Eyncourt saw his young wife in a position in which he must not leave her, in which no man of spirit or principle could suffer a wife to remain. He intercepted Edith the same night on her way to her own room, drew her away to a retired oriel in a gallery, and broke to her his plans, his reasons, his wishes. There were tears, and Edith was submissive as a wife; but she was firm on one point. She would go with him wherever he wished, whenever he required it; she would guard his secret; but she would not affront her father's roof by a clandestine intercourse, and she obtained of him a promise that when she had placed herself, as she dared not refuse, under his protection, he would regard more the dictates of Christian piety than his legal rights. What piety enjoined in such a case he had already learned of Herbert Courtenay, to whom, under the seal of confession, this secret had been imparted by both.

V. But while we are explaining how this young saint came to elope, the duke's chariot and four is careering over the hills of Devon in pursuit of the fugitives. It was ascertained at the first post-house that a light traveling chariot had gone down to St. Valerie at six and returned at half-past eight, and then proceeded immediately to Exeter with fresh horses, which had been kept in readiness. A servant behind gave all the orders, and the persons within had not been seen.

Exeter was three hours' good posting, and it was exactly eleven when Edith's father, who was accompanied by Herbert Courtenay, got away from the post-house; but from slight delays, owing to the hour and the darkness of

the night (for the moon had gone down and there was a fog) they did not reach that city till three in the morning. This was pleasant, particularly as the duke could reflect that the runaways, having had relays in waiting at every stage, and a clear moonlight to go by, had probably done the distance in two hours and a half. He calculated that by the time he got clearly out of Exeter the lovers might be half-way to Bristol; for of course they would travel all night. Assuming that Scotland was their object, he consoled himself with thinking that it was a long way to the border.

Such being his Grace's view of the case, he was more surprised than pleased to learn, at Exeter, that the chariot which had come in from Chudleigh at eleven, had stopped at the post-house, and that horses were ordered for a fresh start at nine the next morning. He almost doubted the information was a ruse; but he and Herbert jumped out, were ushered into a parlor by the half-awakened boots, and the landlord was summoned, who rose without difficulty, even at that hour, for two gentlemen in a chariot and four.

"Yes, sir; gentleman and lady; very young gentleman, and very young lady.—A servant; no lady's maid, sir.—Servant engaged the rooms in the morning.—No name.—Retired immediately."

"What rooms have they?"

"Bed-room and parlor, sir. If you will take beds, gentlemen, you will easily find out in the morning if it is the party."

A cool proposition, of which the good sense was far from being appreciated by an impatient father.

It could hardly fail that D'Eyncourt and Edith were immediately detected at the inn for runaways. They were so very young, and Edith had "no maid;" which, for a lady traveling in her own chariot was, to say the least, unusual. Then her costume, which she had had no time to change, was not deemed appropriate at the inn. Her white muslin robe, youthfully fashioned, and showing, when she took off her cloak, the whitest arm and shoulder that ever were seen, did not escape a wondering and suspicious regard. D'Eyncourt's position was soon settled—a young blade of a gentleman's son (very possibly a lord) who had persuaded this pretty young creature to go off with him. But the landlord's wife, whom a mixture of feminine curiosity and motherly kindness brought in, to supply the place of a maid so suspiciously wanting, was persuaded that the young lady was a young lady really, and married to boot. Edith's shyness, simplicity, loveliness, the ring on her wedded finger, and her pious habits were irresistible. While the duke, excited and bewildered, listened to the innkeeper's relation with a devouring anxiety that overcame his patrician reserve, D'Eyncourt, quite dressed, entered the room. The landlord drew back with a little groan at the sight of the gay deceiver.

"I recognized your grace's voice," said the young man, "and came down to speak to you."

Edith's father turned quickly. The lover was pale, but did not shrink from the duke's eye.

"His grace is informed of the circumstances?"

Herbert shook his head.

"Then you did not see Jessie?" Another negative.

"Might I ask you, sir, to come to my apartment?" said D'Eyncourt, in a cheerful tone of kind respect. "Excuse me, Herbert."

The candles had burned low and had been put out, but the well-replenished grate blazed cheerfully and threw over the apartment that agreeable flickering light, which, contrasting with the deep shadows cast by the furniture on the walls, and by the mantle on the ceiling, is so inviting to midnight reveries. D'Eyncourt, in a low voice, begged the duke to be seated. The latter's countenance softened, as he observed these indications that D'Eyncourt had kept watch that night.

"Edith is sleeping in the next room," said her lover, in the same subdued voice. With that ingenuous manner which commands belief, he related the whole story of their marriage. He had done very wrong in that instance, but his motive had been purely to secure Edith. And she too had erred, but in great part from ignorance, and not perceiving the importance of what she did; influenced too by a conviction, which she had failed in imparting to her lover, that her parents really approved of their attachment. In the elopement he justified her entirely, and here he repeated things that Edith had said, which touched the duke, who recognized his daughter's loyal character coming out under circumstances calculated so severely to try it. As for himself, with a manliness that in his present position was as graceful as natural, he insisted that he had taken the only course that lay open to him as a man of spirit. However justly he might be blamed for the action which had led to all this, he had acquired rights by it, and incurred obligations, with which, as he frankly informed his father-in-law, he could not, and would not, brook interference.

"Would it not have been better to tell me all this at St. Walerie?" said the duke, mildly. "This might have been settled, then, without compromising Edith as at present."

"That is what Herbert strongly advised, sir. But I was resolved not to negotiate for the possession of my wife."

In fine, let us freely blame our Edith for the secret nuptials, albeit she considered them as but a betrothal. At the same time let us allow that there are weaknesses which a woman would be less perfect, if she wanted. After her first (and considering her youth, pardonable) error, she threaded the intricacies of her embarrassing position with the certainty of a somnambula; or of a human spirit which has not forfeited by sin the mysterious guidance of its awful Familiar—the Spirit of God.

VI. The next morning the two chariots returned amicably to St. Walerie. The elopement was in the papers in four-and-twenty hours. The youth of the fair culprit was mentioned in extenuation, and her reputed piety was not forgotten. Every body expected that a marriage would take place immediately, and considerable astonishment was felt when, the family coming up to town soon after, on the assembling of Parliament, the daughter was introduced as Lady Edith Stuart. The duchess never explained this: she had no fancy for the publicity of counter-statements; but she let it be seen that

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she was proud of her step-daughter, and that the confidence of both parents, as well in her as in her affianced husband, was unreserved. When it became understood that they were not to be married till after Easter, Edith and D'Eyncourt got the credit of being a very innocent pair. In short, they were married (at St. George's Church of course) with the greatest *éclat*. The duchess gave a breakfast of royal sumptuousness. It was the most brilliant hymen of the season. And Edith's father knew how to display on such an occasion the munificence of a prince. There were debtors discharged, maidens portioned, households restored to comfort. Sickness, age, and hopeless infirmity, were taught to invoke blessings on the head of his daughter not less effectual than those pronounced at the altar. This was the way he took to vindicate his unforfeited esteem, and remove every shadow from her fame.

The duchess had also her own ideas on this head. Indeed, it was evident, that she had a way of viewing things quite her own. With the sacred bliss of human and wedded love she had associations very different from those which are implied in our present manners.

The duke's seat of Leighton House, in Buckinghamshire, had not the palatial magnificence, nor the picturesque architectural details, nor the paradisaical site of St. Walerie; but it possessed the gentler domestic dignity of an old English Hall of the first class. It was an extensive Elizabethan pile, heavy but imposing, and placed in the center of an ancient and noble park, pierced in all directions with stately avenues. In this house was Edith born, and before its ancient porch were she and D'Eyncourt set down, after a drive of some delicious hours through a blooming and fragrant country, that with the early blossoming hedges of the white thorn seemed dressed for a bridal. D'Eyncourt had never been at Leighton, and Edith had the pleasure of showing him every thing. While they still pause before the portrait of Edith's mother, in the great drawing-room, which she had reserved to the last, the sound of many wheels announces the arrival of an expected and beloved party. It must be confessed that they turn simultaneously from the picture to each other, and that their embrace is mutual, fond, and lingering.

"I knew you would be scandalized at the state of the chapel," said the duchess to Herbert Courtenay, "so I ordered it to be newly fitted up."

This was said as the gay and happy evening began to wane, and Edith's cheek, despite herself, became tinged with the deepest rose. But Blanche Courtenay and Juliet D'Eyncourt passed each an arm round her waist, and all rose and moved in a sweet order to the chapel.

It was a long wainscoted room, with a ceiling carved in oak. It was adorned with large pictures of family scenes from the Old Testament. At the further end, upon a dais elevated by three or four steps, the altar, dressed with dark-green velvet embroidered in crimson and gold, had a cambric covering with a deep fall of costly lace. It sustained a massive crucifix of gold, wax-lights in golden candlesticks and flowers in precious vases. Suspended from the ceiling by silver chains, three lamps of the same material lighted the length of the chapel, and threw a

soft clear light, as upon all the pictures, so upon a fine Marriage of the Virgin, by Guercino—the altar-piece. Even Lady Arabella, the duke's maiden sister, looked at all this with a softened countenance, as she leaned over the high back of one of the richly-carved chairs, for she was really not very able to kneel. Perhaps she would have been ashamed to come in even on the wedding-night of her favorite Edith, had not the little Alice taken her aunt's hand to lead her to the chapel, with an air of innocent gravity. The child kneels alone at the cushioned *prie-dieu* which her aunt should have shared; and having said her prayer, kneels on, looking at the altar-piece.

And now Herbert Courtenay, in the new and appropriate vestments with which the duchess had supplied the vestiary, stood at a lectern of antique form wrought in brass, and having blessed the assembled family, read a selected lesson, the first twenty-one verses of the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews; for the sake of the beautiful text, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled;" for its manifold appropriateness in other respects, and for its touching benediction. The youthful choir sung "Thanks be to God;" they confessed; were absolved; and then, preceded by verse and response, the nuptial psalms were chanted, and the nuptial anthem sung, and the hymn, and *Nunc Dimittis*. Such was their Christian epithalamium!

Thus prepared, all voices joined in the chanted creed; followed the cadenced suffrages, the thrilling monotone of the collects, the harmonious close of the Amens! And last came the prayers for the continuance of Edith and D'Eyncourt in God's love, for the fruitfulness of their union, for the gift of mutual and constant affec-

tion; prayers that soothed Edith's fears as she listened with a devout and trembling heart, and hallowed in the thoughts of those who surrounded her, the nuptial bed prepared with a sort of high ceremony for her beauty, submissive love and virgin innocence; and for which no menial or stranger hand was suffered that night to disarray her.

When man's intercourse with God is subjected to a frigid rule that represses the instinctive demands of the heart and imagination, and leaves faith without utterance or support, the next step is the cowardice that shrinks from sympathy in our intercourse with our fellows. A nation is resolved into hostile classes struggling in unmitigated rivalry; the Church breaks up into sects; society into coteries; the process of isolation invades families; the most sacred personal events lose their seriousness and dignity; the solemn sacramental acts of human life, which former generations contemplated with awe, are vulgarized and made even ridiculous. But it was not on such a system that the soul of Alice Stuart was nurtured; these phantoms of worldly fear fled from the dauntless faith and love that tenanted the breast of the Duchess of Lennox.

Few indiscretions, however, escape punishment; perhaps, because disappointments, necessary for us in all cases, are never so salutary as when we perceive that we have nobody to blame for them but ourselves. There was one of Edith's relatives, who was too much annoyed by her elopement, easily to forgive her. Lord Stratherne was affectionate as ever to his sister, but he said, "If I die unmarried, Edith, I shan't leave you my fortune." And an extreme tenacity of purpose has always been characteristic of the Stuarts.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

WE are once more, for the last time, on the terrace of the Cliffords' villa in La Cava, commanding, as we have said, one of the most exquisite views of the valley, including a blue glimpse of the distant bay through the deep gap in the southern mountains. It was past mid-day and sultry, but an awning of striped cloth protected the brothers from the nearly vertical rays of the sun, while it admitted whatever air might be stirring in that comparatively elevated region. The brothers were lounging on divans; lying on which, or on the floor, a quantity of letters and papers indicated a recent arrival of the post, or perhaps an express.

"The triumph of the party in '37 made your mother a peeress," said Frederick, "and their defeat at present makes you a peer. I call that falling on one's feet."

"If the present piece of good fortune," said Augustus, "contribute as much as the former to my personal felicity, I shall have reason to congratulate myself."

"We can not all have every advantage. Had you been in my place four years ago, you might have secured the great treasure of domestic

happiness; were I Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth, now, and the heir of Lady Devereux, I might make an effort to secure mine."

"Do you mean that that insensible heart is at last really captivated?" said Augustus.

"My heart is not insensible," said his brother, in a low voice. "When I loved, it was at first sight, and I am as enthusiastically in love as ever you were."

"What a peerless creature it should be to produce such an effect on you," said Lord Beauchamp.

"I believe that she is peerless, but it was a face of angel loveliness, and one look of divinely sweet expression—purity, intelligence, and tenderness blended—that won me. I *knew* nothing of her, though I have since learned that it would be presumption in me to address her as I wish. And yet my chances of success in such a suit would be very great."

"They would be that with any woman," said Augustus, with interest.

"If I were Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth, I might at least try," said Frederick.

"I wish you were, with all my heart," said his elder brother.

"I must have my trial, as you have had yours

There is no fate in all this, my dear Augustus; but merely that wise and proportionate distribution of the lots of men, which, recognizing its source, we term Providence."

There was something very remarkable in Clifford's way of saying this. It had none of that conceit which marks the purely intellectual, or, we may say, verbal apprehension of what he said; it was not said *impressively*, as people speak; the accent and look were those of one acquiescing in the statement of another, rather than propounding his own. It was this peculiar manner of uttering the most thoughtful and most formalized propositions that always took from Clifford all air of pedantry.

There was a short pause, and Frederick, glancing at a letter which he held in his hand, said, "Well, my father says we had better get nearer home, on account of Lady Devereux's health. Where do you propose going? for my motions depend on yours."

"Why, I think Switzerland would be best, as my father suggests; don't you?"

"Wherever you like."

"And I thought that as you don't know Milan, we had better spend a week there. I should like you to know Santisola. He treated me with great hospitality, and his palace is the most beautiful in Italy."

"Your wishes are mine."

"Well, then, we will set off to-morrow; Karl shall go to Naples to-night and arrange the passports. When I am to make a move, I like to do it at once."

CHAPTER II.

THERE has been a good deal of jesting of late at false pretensions to blood and antiquity among the English aristocracy. The Cliffords could never by any possibility come in for any share of this. The head of their house might be called a fool if you liked, but it could not be doubted that he was an ancient Norman noble. Their baronial power dated from the Conquest, but the chief luster of the family had been achieved in the French wars of the Plantagenets, with which their very name was identified.

It was soon after the commencement of the eighteenth century, that the youngest son of an Earl of — entered the imperial service at an early age. At something past fifty, General Count Clifford, being at that time governor of one of the most important cities in Lombardy, married the youthful daughter of one of his early comrades in arms, the Prince Victor XIV., di Santisola, an Italian sovereign, being one of the three hundred feudatories of the Holy Roman Empire. The Princess Adela died, still a girl, in her second childbed, and General Clifford, who had adored his wife, immediately resigned his command and returned with his two infant children to England. In forty years of service his patrimony had accumulated, and his illustrious bride had not been a portionless one. He purchased a moderate estate in a county recommended by the number of Roman Catholic gentry living within visiting distance, and he had the satisfaction of living to see his son arrive at man's estate and marry an Irish heiress, the most con-

siderable Roman Catholic match of the time. Among the numerous children of this marriage, Louis Clifford, the father of our friends at Cava, had the good fortune to be the fifth and youngest son.

Old General Clifford, his son being so well provided for, and that son having changed his ancestral name for that of the heiress of a branch of the De Courcys, bequeathed to his daughter the moderate estate of which we have spoken, with a recommendation to which Adela Clifford would have loyally adhered, even had not the suggestion been her own. She adopted the youngest of her nephews, had him educated in England, and caused him to resume the name and arms of his paternal ancestors. Then, as soon as he had attained his majority, prompted partly by family feeling and partly by her concern for his spiritual welfare, she earnestly advised him to marry.

Never was the advice of a maiden aunt more palatable—at least in the abstract. But it has ever been observed that the coincidence between the counsels of maturity and the wishes of youth is seldom absolute. There were in the county, or at least in that part of England, several Roman Catholic families of distinction—all having at that juncture marriageable daughters, yet Louis Clifford, the flower of their youth, thought fit to fall in love with a Protestant. Propinquity accounted for this in part. Clifford Grove was but a few miles from a place called Glentworth Castle, and that was not all; for Louis Clifford had a married sister among the Roman Catholic families above-mentioned, and Lyston Hall and Glentworth were almost one domain. Mary Nevil, too, was the beauty of the county, and where two young persons of different sexes, of a suitable age, of the same rank, are universally singled out as being respectively the favorites of the other sex and envy of their own, it is almost a matter of course that they single out each other as the worthiest object of a delightful and reciprocated preference. But then Mary Nevil was not only a Protestant, but the daughter of a clergyman—a noble, a beneficed, and dignified clergyman, it was true, but after all, a married priest! The thought was contamination to the pure Roman orthodoxy and immaculate pedigree of the pious Adela Clifford. On the other hand, Mary Nevil's mother (she was the sole fruit of a second wedlock) was a dowager peeress, the greatest proprietor of the county, and the proudest woman in the three kingdoms. No woman was ever more free from religious prejudices than Lady Devereux, but she looked upon the faith of her daughter's lover in a light still more unfavorable, as a political disability; and Lady Devereux, by position as well as character, was a great female politician—the most powerful and by far the sagest of those celebrated women who have exercised such influence in the party to which she belonged.

But the mutual attachment of the young people, inflamed by the opposition of their friends into a romantic passion, carried it at length. The rich and profligate peer for whom Lady Devereux had destined her daughter (let us begin by detesting the *bête noire* of the history) disgusted her by changing his politics; she yielded an abrupt consent; and the good Adela

Clifford recognized, in the removal of all opposition but her own, an indication of Providence to which she dared not oppose herself.

With a lovely and beloved wife, an income sufficient for quiet though elegant tastes, with a claim to consideration so clearly resting on blood and connections as to render display unnecessary to the gratification of that reasonable degree of social vanity from which few are free; with a family in due time that sufficed to occupy the affections without being so numerous as to awaken more than that moderate anxiety for their future, which is the freshening stimulus of love, and hinders domestic bliss from stagnating; Louis Clifford enjoyed, till youth had passed, a lot as nearly answering to the golden mean as can well be imagined. The world had a different mood for his elder brothers.

The De Courcy estate was very great, but heavily encumbered; and it needed no stinted income to maintain the splendor of Castle De Courcy and the hereditary hospitality of its owners. For the marriage portions of three daughters—too lovely for a Flemish convent—Mr. De Courcy consented to a judicious thinning of the ancestral trees, the finest in the isle of improvidence. It at least was not in vain. Isabel, the eldest, led off triumphantly with their neighbor and cousin, the Earl of Mortmain. Adela followed almost immediately with Sir Montmorency Dillon of Dillonstown. Henrietta Maria was much younger than her sisters, but in due time she also became nubile. Lady Mortmain took her to England, where she bestowed her hand upon the eldest son of the first Lord Battersea—one of Mr. Pitt's peers, whose shield bore a ship under full sail, and whose motto was "*Patriam dilavit et nos.*" Lord Battersea's forty thousand a year was acquired by his father and grandfather in the pursuits that aggrandized the Medici.

The younger sons could not be so easily disposed of, even with a parallel good fortune. Francis, who missed by one being the fortunate youngest brother, was sent to a seminary, discovered a vocation, took orders, went to America, and died of a disease incident to the climate just as the bull arrived for his consecration to a bishopric in the wilderness.

Gerald, the senior of Francis, had a passion for the profession of arms. Like his grandfather, for whose sake he was welcomed, he entered the still distinctively Imperial service. He was wounded at Marengo, nearly made prisoner at Ulm, cut his way through with the gallant Archduke, fought at Austerlitz and gained two decorations. Before the next hostilities the contest had broken out in the Peninsula. Prescient of the calamities of the Wagram campaign, and wishing to combat by the side of his countrymen, he offered his services to Spain. Educated in the most rigorous disciplinary school of Europe, but disgustfully aware of its defects; thoroughly acquainted with the French tactics; so rapid in the acquisition of languages that he learned Spanish between Vienna and Lisbon; a Catholic in religion; he was just the man Sir Arthur Wellesley wanted. He was a general officer at Talavera, was mentioned with emphatic praise in one of those Spartan dispatches, and was killed by a chance shell at Ciudad Rodrigo.

The family, indeed, was characterized by

talent in all its members. Victor, the second son, in defiance of unfavorable laws, chose the civil gown. He succeeded greatly, but he was forty before he was in a situation to marry as suited his tastes and pride of birth. At forty he was accustomed to celibacy. He died at sixty, of effusion on the brain, about a year too soon for a silk gown, but admitted to be eloquent and learned, and having enjoyed for twenty years the largest professional income in Ireland. He bequeathed the very considerable fortune he had acquired to his brother Louis, who, it was now become certain, would ultimately represent the family.

Francis, the devoted priest; Gerald, the brave and accomplished soldier; Victor, the acute and successful lawyer; had each at least a career. They had labored in honorable vocations; they had fulfilled the manly duties of life; only they had not tasted its sweetest enjoyments, if those of the heart be such. Was the favored heir to be more fortunate?

When Reginald De Courcy came of age, his father said to him—"I have your brothers and sisters to establish, my dear fellow; until that is accomplished, you can not think of marrying."

Fourteen years after, his father recalled him from the continent, and said to him, "Your brothers and sisters are all settled, and it is time for you to think of marrying."

"I do not wish to marry at present," said Reginald De Courcy. "I can not suffer you or my mother to make a sacrifice on my account. I find my bachelor life very agreeable."

So he returned to Rome, and the society of the charming Princess Massimi. The loss of this tender and constant friend, after an intimacy of twenty years, drove him again to his country. He came to close his father's eyes. His mother survived but a few months. At fifty-six he put off his filial mourning, and considered whether it was too late to begin the life of home and the hopes that grow out of its sacred joys. He visited his brother Louis, and resolved that it was too late. A shock of paralysis confirmed a judicious decision, and though he survived it six years, he never quitted Clifford Grove. At his death, which occurred not long after that of Victor, Mr. Clifford, as the heir of both, became not only a great commoner, but that *rara avis in terris*—a rich Irish landlord.

To him that hath shall be given—is a law of nature and Providence alike. There is doubtless a final cause for that tendency which we observe in property, as in power, to accumulate in great masses. Louis Clifford at any rate was an instance of the fact. The day after his brother's funeral, his mother-in-law summoned him to her presence, and announced to him her intention of making his eldest son her heir.

The Beauchamps of Glentworth were an off-set from the Earls of Worcester and Warwick, so eminent and powerful under the early Plantagenets. One of the few baronial houses that escaped the sword of their later factions, or the deadlier axe of the House of Tudor, they became earls under the more genial Stuart dynasty, and dukes when the revolution had given the aristocracy a quiet supremacy. Nevertheless, this great name, so long preserved, was destined to extinction. The father of Lady Devereux was the last duke, nor did he transmit to his daugh-

ver even the old baronies in fee which had been the root of their honors, for these had been separated from the estates and other titles at his own accession, and had fallen into abeyance. The father of Mrs. Louis Clifford was the only son of one of the co-heiresses.

He was the junior, by several years, of the Lady Margaret Beauchamp. When she was eighteen therefore, and had yet a brother living, the idea of marrying him would hardly suggest itself to her mind. She treated with coquetry a boyish passion that Augustus Nevil had conceived for his beautiful kinswoman. At Glentworth, in the groves where their daughter, long after, listened to the vows of Louis Clifford, she allowed him almost the privileges of an accepted lover; took moonlight rambles with him, listened to and praised his poetry, accepted his gifts, vouchsafed him, on fitting occasions, as a cousin always, some slight embrace, which Augustus offered with trembling and remembered with rapture. But who can declare the obligation incurred by giving or receiving the slightest caress of love, or predict its consequences? The preciousness of the human spirit gives a value to its most transitory emotions. These passages of sentiment occurred in the vacations of the lover, who was at Eton; and one Christmas, after dreaming all that half over the delicious complaisances and fancied love of his Margaret, he had the pleasure of being invited to her nuptials.

A decade rolled away, and brought changes. Lady Devereux had become a widow. Her brother had died unmarried. She had barely laid aside her mourning for her husband, when she was obliged to resume it for her father. Since the first Duchess of Northumberland, no woman had possessed so great an inheritance. Mr. Nevil was in holy orders, beneficed, unmarried, but meditating wedlock; for, though he retained a vague, sentimental remembrance of his early romance, he had also a sense of injury which had softened into a disapproval of the character of his brilliant relative. But she opened a correspondence with him on the subject of his claims under the abeyance. She asked him to Glentworth, and in its beautiful wildernesses the magic of first love prevailed over resentment.

It was a serious disappointment to Lady Devereux that the sole fruit of this union was a daughter. It was the period of the long Tory rule. She was frustrated in a first attempt to get the abeyance terminated in favor of her husband. Then Mr. Nevil himself prematurely died. She only vowed with the greater determination to succeed, before she died herself, in a project so comprehensive that she hesitated to disclose it, and in which, as we have seen, she did not ultimately fail—of founding, namely, in her grandson, a house as powerful as that which he would represent, and invested at least with its most ancient distinctions.

CHAPTER III.

THE rosy light of sunset tinged the vast pile of white marble, with its innumerable pinnacles, its thousands of statues, its fretwork minarets

and flying buttresses. The dark, sober material which suits a gothic cathedral under the opaque skies of the north, would be misplaced amid the luster and transparency of this softer clime.

The brothers entered the Duomo. No other cathedral of Italy impresses you with so profound a sense of religion as this. The vastness and dimness of the nave; the mighty shafts that sustain the groined roof; the grave color; the simplicity of the aisles, undisfigured by the numerous altars elsewhere seen; the grilled and gloomy choir, with its seven ever-burning lamps, and the crimson folds of the baldachino, half-screening the gorgeous windows of the Lady-chapel, are an impressive contrast to the tawdry splendor too often observed in Italian churches. Where the rich western windows of the transept threw a light across the rapidly-deepening gloom, a crowd were kneeling in front of the choir, half in light and half in shadow: a service was commencing. The canons were kneeling in their stalls; in front of the altar were numerous priests in the same posture. The great candles were lit. Suddenly began the Litany of the Virgin. The Cliffords knelt immediately on the pavement where they stood, crossed themselves devoutly, and joined in the response as it was taken up by the people.

"Sancta Maria! Ora pro nobis."

Grouped near the last grand pillar of the nave, and but a few yards from the spot where the brothers knelt, a party of foreigners, and evidently of Protestants (for they remained standing during the whole) assisted at this scene. The white garments of two ladies could alone be distinguished, for the light of the choir did not reach them, and darkness was rapidly invading the nave. When the brothers rose, at the conclusion of the Litany, Lord Beauchamp made a genuflexion and turned away. Frederick remained, looking at the illumined altar, from which the priests and canons were slowly retiring, while a surpliced servant of the church was preparing to extinguish the candles. A light touch on the arm made him turn.

It was a lady in elegant evening costume, her head uncovered, except by a lace veil worn in the graceful fashion that still survives in Milan, and which even the higher classes have not wholly laid aside. The face was in deep shadow, but as the outline of her head and figure caught the light of the choir, against which they were defined, Clifford's quick eye observed the brightness and youthful arrangement of her hair, streaming upon her shoulders in ringlets. A sweet voice said: "I could not be so ungrateful as to leave the church without speaking to you, Mr. Clifford."

"Alice!"

"I must not get separated from my friends, but I trust we shall soon meet again."

She saluted him by a graceful reverence, with something of the manner of the old court, and glided away. He saw her mingle with a party. He followed at a little distance. They walked slowly down the nave, passed out at the great portal, descended the steps of the Duomo. Two carriages were in attendance. A young and beautiful woman was first handed in; then Lady Alice. A gentleman, whom some might have called young, and whom Clifford opined to be a clergyman, got in after them, and two decidedly

young men sprang into the second carriage. The footmen mounted the box, the equipage set off at a grand pace, traversed the whole length of the Piazza, and disappeared at its lower extremity.

Lady Alice had taken the front seat of the britska, so that as they drove away she could see the glittering front of the Duomo till the carriage quitted the square. She waved her handkerchief in adieu. The gentleman smiled. The other lady said: "It must look very beautiful by this light."

"The Duomo? Beautiful, indeed. I could wish never to quit Milan," replied the young girl, with a sigh.

The carriages rolled swiftly and noiselessly over the smooth wheel-tracks which are laid down in the streets of Milan, and seemed to pursue with magical ease those endless parallel lines of flagging. The regulated and simultaneous tramp of the disciplined steeds, on the narrow central *pavé*, was the only sound. At length they turned into a *porte-cochère*, thundered into a vast court, and drew up at the foot of a grand staircase brilliantly lighted. While the gentleman in the first carriage descended with some deliberation, the two young men in the other had time to spring out, and the youngest looking offered his hand to the ladies with *empressment*.

"Do you know, Lord Wessex, that Alice is wishing never to quit Milan?"

"I was just saying the same thing to D'Eyncourt, Lady Edith. And I had reason," added the marquis in a lower voice, as he aided the younger sister to alight, "for no other city was ever half so agreeable to me as this has been the last fortnight."

Lady Alice checked herself, in lifting her light robe to mount the marble stair, so as to display the most exquisite little slippered foot in the world—"Oh, that is not my case at all: I enjoyed Florence, and Rome, and Naples, quite as much, and was just as reluctant to quit them at last." This was said with great apparent simplicity, and it must have been quite impossible for Lord Wessex to determine whether the disclaimer of a softer interest in Milan than in other places was intended, or if intended, in what degree it was sincere, and in what girlish coquetry.

The Marquis of Wessex, at twenty-seven, was as graceful in mien as we have seen him at eighteen, and decidedly handsomer. A soft, dark whisker gave a certain manliness to features in themselves effeminate. His simple dress indicated the taste of an aristocrat. If a refined puppyism peeped out any where, it was in the very snowy hand. But the tie of his white neck-cloth maintained its Etonian reputation, and a figure so well-proportioned required nothing of the clothes but that they should fit. This also was the opinion of the Marquis of Wessex.

was of a German house, still counted as sovereign. It was under the influence of political patriotic, and Italian ideas that he took the pains he did to cultivate relations of intimacy with the British aristocracy. The Duke and Duchess of Lennox were banqueting at his palace on the eve of their departure from Milan.

The other guests were not numerous, but distinguished. A fair-haired, handsome man, in a very plain green uniform, and wearing the cross of St. Alexander Newsky, was a sovereign duke and Russian general. A sallow, square-faced personage, in a blue uniform, nearly hidden with gold lace, was an ex-marshal of France. A tranquil, gentlemanlike ecclesiastic, with a clear brow and mild blue eyes, a bland and open, yet astute countenance, was a person who might become far more important than either; for you perceived that he wore the black habit edged with scarlet, and scarlet stockings, which indicate in Italy a prince of the church. And the Prince di Santisola, just before dinner was announced, said to the gentleman who accompanied Lady Edith and Alice from the Duomo—"My dear Mr. Courtenay, the Cardinal Count Mastai, one of the ablest diplomates in the Roman States, has heard a good deal of you, and desires me to present you to him."

The Duke of Saxe-Kleinburg had necessarily his suite; the Princess di Santisola her ladies. The exquisite room in which they banqueted was hung with portraits, every one of which was a master-piece; the table blazed with gold, of which the workmanship was more to be esteemed than the material: but what attracted all eyes, and elicited an involuntary murmur of admiration as that distinguished company became seated around it, was a work due only to the fashioning hand of the Supreme Artist—the seraph-like beauty of the Lady Alice Stuart. Fortunate Marquis of Wessex! to sit next her at dinner, and possess so many claims to her regard; as, for example, your high rank; your vast fortune; her brother's wishes, to which she is bound to give so much weight; and last, but not least in such a case, your good looks, social experience and knowledge of her sex. Lady Alice listens with a thoughtful air to the gallantries of her neighbor, and fixes her regard, sometimes with a blush, upon the richly-toned portraits on the opposite walls.

Calling, one day, with her mother, on the Princess Santisola, Alice, who was not a very learned herald, had found on her highness's table an old volume of the British Peerage, published in the reign of William IV., and which the Prince had brought from England. The young lady took the opportunity, when unobserved, to turn to the different titled branches of the Cliffords; and first, with some eagerness, to the modern earldom so called. It was the Protestant line; and she did find a Frederick William, born in the year 1800! So she turned next, but not without some palpitation, to the oldest title on the list of English Earls; and here she found, among the collaterals, the following name and date:—"2. Frederick, b. Jan. 17, 1818." A process of reasoning, peculiarly feminine, convinced Alice that this was the hero of her adventure. She observed with dismay, as she pondered over such information as might further be extracted from the brief record, that one of

CHAPTER IV.

THE Prince di Santisola, the first noble of Lombardy, and the wealthiest, was a mediatized prince of the Holy Roman Empire. His wife

his aunts had married a Roman Catholic peer, that one of his uncles had received holy orders in the Roman Church, that another had died holding a Spanish commission. But her spirit revived when she found that his mother was the daughter of a dignified clergyman, and that his grandmother was the representative of the great Whig and Protestant family of Beauchamp, and allied to the Tory, but no less Protestant, family of Devereux. Lady Alice revolved the names thus blended—Clifford, De Courcy, Neville, Beauchamp! Then she asked herself with a sigh—Was Frederick Clifford a Roman Catholic? The scene she had witnessed this evening at the Duomo had settled that question; and as little could it be doubted that he was the identical "Frederick," whose parentage she had ascertained. His companion (evidently from their resemblance, his brother) could be no other than "1. Augustus, b. Nov. 30, 1810." However, it was neither the religion nor the birth of Frederick Clifford that formed, at this moment, the subject of her maiden reverie.

In their momentary interview at the Duomo, one word alone had escaped him—"Alice!"—But that little word by itself implied so much, even if his faltering utterance had not betrayed the impassioned interest that woman is so quick to divine. It is her memory of that word and tone that calls to her cheek the blush which Lord Wessex not unnaturally ascribes to his own adroit compliments. The young girl, by no means free from vanity either, is quite unconscious that Lord Wessex thinks her new dress so charming. Simple indeed; but what else is needed to set off faultless loveliness? Her soft and serious "Yes!"—her absent "Oh! I should think not," to a question that she misunderstands, do not deceive him. What suddenly dissolves her abstraction and makes her a real listener, is a name uttered by their host. He is speaking to her father of a portrait, on which the eyes of Alice have often rested already. It is that of the General Clifford, who married the Princess Adela di Santisola, whose mother was of the house of Savoy, and whose grandmother a Bourbon.

"Why, this must be an ancestor of Lord Beauchamp," said the duke.

But the dinner must come to an end; and the saloons of the Princess Santisola—a blaze of mirrors and gold, and lapis lazuli, with ceilings by masters of fresco, and pictures, the least of which was fit to make the fortune of a gallery—are filled with a brilliant throng. It was not a ball, but the costumes of the ladies indicated that they had come to dance; a full orchestra were flourishing their bows, and quadrilles were speedily formed in a gallery of marble and lustres, having a floor polished and variegated like a table of marquetry.

What is a great want at present, is a philosophical theory of amusements. In the absence of such a thing, let us observe in passing, that the dance—a formalization (immemorially) of that vague and irrepressible sentiment which, apart from definite wishes or individual preference, attracts the sexes to each other, combining it with art into a series of harmonized and regulated actions, subjecting it to the obligation of concurrence with an influence that unites the simplest of sensuous, with the most refined of

intellectual, pleasures, and which thus permits it to be manifested unconsciously by the most modest, and enjoyed by the most pure—is really as essential in its time and place as prayer (not for all alike, but) to maintain, as a general thing, the healthy tone and cheerful decency of social intercourse. Banish it, if you like; but know assuredly, that then the candor of youth flies with its gayety.

Lady Alice was extremely fond of dancing. Her tender abstraction was dissipated like the mist of a summer morning, at the first burst of the violins. She gave her hand to Lord Wessex with a look of liveliest pleasure; and in the fairy dress which he had vainly praised, her floating golden tresses playing on a neck that invested with its own splendor and softness the rest of her exquisite shape, she was, indeed, a vision from which few could turn. It may be believed that her hand was constantly in requisition; but the Marquis of Wessex was adroit in such matters, and she had not danced with more than two or three partners, before he had secured her again for a waltz.

"Certainly," said she, when he asked her; "I do not waltz with every one; but I regard you as a brother."

The feelings of the partner thus privileged were, however, any thing but fraternal. Nor was he at all discouraged in his passionate hopes by the grounds on which she rested this mark of her favor; it was evident that Lady Alice *could* assign no other, and the smile of affectionate expansion that accompanied the gentle consent, might well seem that of a more flattering softness, yet unacknowledged in the maiden's heart.

"You are tired?" said the young noble, in a voice of soft interest.

"Not the least."

"You waltz so well. It is so much less fatiguing."

"I am very warm, though. It's not an amusement for the dog-days—is it?"

"Would you like to go out on the terrace? Every body does, after dancing."

"If every body does, I may. Ah!—it is delicious here."

The terrace was planted with orange trees and lighted with colored lamps. Parties walked up and down; some stood in groups, chattering and eating ices.

"You are not afraid of taking cold?"

"Never did such a thing in my life."

"I can quite fancy you above the infirmities of ordinary clay."

"I wish you would get me an ice," replied Lady Alice, immediately tying her handkerchief round her throat.

"She is aware," thought the marquis, "the little coquette, how much that becomes her white throat and beautiful head."

He watched her enjoying the ice as unaffectedly as the dance. She recommended him to eat one. This was coffee and cream, she earnestly assured him; a delicious compound, and so nicely frozen.

"The things that vulgarize others captivate in you," said the marquis.

"Don't you think," said Alice, looking up with a smile, "that we should have such thoughts ourselves that others could never seem vulgar for sharing the infirmities of clay?"

"You shall teach me to have such thoughts," said the marquis, after a pause, and speaking with emotion.

Lady Alice went on to eat her ice, without replying. Perhaps her companion deemed her silence an encouragement. Perhaps, though fully aware that the pear, as they say, was not ripe, he feared that some one else might pluck it before him, if he left it on the tree. Also, what had been said offered undeniably an occasion which, if suffered to escape, might never return.

"Divine girl!" half murmured Lord Wessex, yet in a tone that evidently was meant for her ear.

The young girl colored, slightly stared, and placed the remainder of her ice on the plinth of a statue near which they were standing.

"Yes," he continued, "I can no longer forbear expressing the adoration which, every instant that I am with you, is rising to my lips—an adoration that no woman before you ever inspired. Before I knew, or had seen you, save as a child, my heart beat at your name, and now the happiness of my whole life is in your power. Beautiful, incomparable Alice! suffer me to take that hand which, even before I knew all its worth, I hoped one day to possess."

But Lady Alice drew back. She plucked one of the flowers from a young orange tree, and began to pull it to pieces. She threw away the petals, and said—

"A wreath of such flowers as these, my lord, I shall probably never wear. At least I am too young to think of it at present."

"Nay, such a resolution as that implies, must yield to the persuasions—the entreaties—of love."

"But not of *your* love," said Alice, looking him earnestly in the face.

"I was not aware that you regarded me with aversion, Lady Alice."

"Nor do I," said Alice. "I have a great regard for your lordship, if you will permit me to say so," she continued; "only not such a regard as to overcome my great disinclination to the very subject of marriage."

"Time, and my persevering devotion," persisted Lord Wessex, not comprehending that a girl of seventeen had formed a dispassionate estimate of his character, and that that estimate was unfavorable, "time and my persevering devotion will, I hope, overcome it."

"Ah," said Alice, "that would be the way to inspire aversion, indeed, to persevere in an unwelcome suit."

At seventeen a declaration of love is not listened to without agitation. If the person be ever so indifferent, it can never be indifferent to a young girl that she is beloved. The heart of Alice fluttered a good deal, though her manner was so composed. As there seemed no more to be said, she expressed a wish to go to the princess's cabinet, where she was sure to find "mamma." She desired to take refuge from her first maiden agitation, under the parental wing. Having passed through the ball-room and another room, they effected, with some difficulty, an entrance into the small saloon on which the resources of art and wealth had been exhausted, and which was called "*Il Gabinetto della Principessa*." It was then that Lord Wes-

sex, broke the silence he had maintained since Alice's last reply, by saying—

"You don't forbid my going with you to Switzerland, as has been proposed?"

"It would give me a great deal of pleasure, on the contrary, as it would all of us."

"I shall not persecute with you an unwelcome suit."

"You mean that you withdraw it. I thank you warmly, my dear Lord Wessex. That is most kind."

Some of the persons who had interposed moved away, and she saw her father. She advanced and took his arm, while Lord Wessex bowed and retired. Alice leaned forward to see with whom the duke was conversing, and met the gaze of Frederick Clifford.

CHAPTER V.

HER father introduced them, and then was glad, as a shy man, to disembarass himself of a young stranger, whom his daughter, he conjectured, would more easily succeed in amusing. Our friends found themselves together as authorized acquaintance. Alice blushed deeply, and looked down. It was Clifford, at length, who first spoke.

"Dear Lady Alice, Providence, it is plain, means us to be friends."

"I think, indeed, it is Providence."

"Every thing is providential, I believe, that happens. But the intervention is not always so evident as in this instance."

"You are a Roman Catholic, I believe, Mr. Clifford," said Alice, looking up. The remark did not seem very pertinent, but Clifford perceived the connection, and smiled.

"It is the faith of my fathers, which I have yet seen no reason to forsake, even amid the superstitions of Italy."

"You allow the existence of superstitions," said Alice, with a faint embarrassment, at the turn the conversation was taking; "and yet your church is infallible?"

"It might be a safe guide practically, and quite an indispensable one, even were it otherwise."

"My uncle Herbert would say that that is true enough, but makes allowance for us, and not for you."

"Your uncle Herbert is the celebrated Mr. Courtenay, I think?"

"His celebrity is painful to him," said Alice, "and not of his own seeking."

"He is a person I should of all things like to know. If what I hear of his sentiments be true and you partake them, our difference of faith, dear Alice, will be no obstacle to a friendship that is the sweetest hope of my life."

"Certainly no barrier to the truest friendship," she replied, with a blush, and perhaps involuntarily resting on the last word.

"You mean to imply that it would be a barrier to more sacred ties?" said Clifford, with a tranquil smile, that disarmed the question of the power to embarrass.

"I have heard it said," replied Lady Alice, evasively, "that where such ties as I suppose you mean are possible, friendship is no

"On the contrary, it seems to me that love is only an involuntary friendship, which marriage renders indissoluble."

"Have you been introduced to mamma yet?" said Alice.

"I have not yet had that honor."

"She is not talking to any body just now. Suppose I take the opportunity?"

Time had as yet only ripened the charms of the Duchess of Lennox. Her figure was still Dian-like; her countenance had not lost its oval contour, nor her complexion its purity. Her large dark eyes rested inquiringly on the pair as they advanced. The daughter's cheek became crimson, as she said, in a tremulous voice, "Mr. Frederick Clifford, mamma."

The duchess also blushed; she extended her hand with quickness. She said nothing, however, but what was quite of course. She asked how long they meant to stay at Milan? It depended on his brother, whose movements at present regulated his own. And after Milan, what was their destination? Did they propose to return home that autumn? In that case, the duchess hoped he would come and see them at St. Valerie. Lord Beauchamp also would be a welcome Christmas guest. She was sorry to hear of his grandmother's failing health. The mother of the duchess and Lady Margaret Beauchamp had been friends in their youth. St. Valerie and Glentworth were two hundred miles apart, she believed; but in these days of railroads that was nothing.

"Have you not a sister, Mr. Clifford? One? I thought so. And about your age, Ally. You must get acquainted with her, next season."

The conversation flowed easily to more general topics. When Frederick spoke, the duchess never took her large dark eyes off his face. Alice listened with modesty, never speaking unless her mother appealed to her, and her cheek was always slightly flushed. Once or twice she was asked to dance, but pleaded fatigue. At last the prince came to lead the duchess to supper, and Clifford was so fortunate as to conduct her beautiful daughter.

"I hardly know which I admire most—your mother or you, Lady Alice. I rather think your mother."

She laughed, but her eye sparkled with tenderness. "That is the most flattering thing said to me yet."

One gay remark led to another. Alice forgot her embarrassment. Seated next each other at supper, while she yielded to the vivacity natural to her sex and years, he availed himself of that expansion of confidence, to draw her into an affectionate familiarity, which he appeared to rest, in a superior sort of way, on the ground of her youth, but which was in truth, for them, the only alternative to a painful reserve.

It was one of the Dorias, who was in the same hotel, that brought the brothers to the Santisola Palace. Lord Beauchamp, for his part had an animated reception from his Milanese acquaintance. The Duke of Saxe-Kleinenburg claimed him as a relative; the count-cardinal benignantly welcomed him as a future pillar of the church; nothing could exceed the cordiality of the Prince di Santisola. At supper, Augustus sate next the Duchessa di Sangazzurras, a relic of the Spanish dominion in the north of Italy, and de-

scended, like her husband, from the noblest families of Castile. The olive-tinted patrician smiled on an Englishman who united two qualifications not generally found in his shop-keeping and heretical country—an incontinent faith, and an immaculate pedigree.

"Your beautiful young countrywoman has a new cavalier, I see, milor; and a dangerous one, I should think, were I milord marquis to whom they say she is affianced."

"Which is she that you call my beautiful countrywoman?"

"What, you don't know La Bella?—I don't say of the evening, for Milan has talked of little else for the last eight days. That is she opposite and below us—that dazzling face with the dark eyes and eyebrows, and floating golden hair like an archangel. Why she is the loveliest creature breathing, and they say the greatest heiress in Europe; and her mother, that tranquil English duchess, who is also very beautiful, permits her to 'flirt,' as you call it with whomsoever she pleases. You laugh, but I can not understand that it is discreet."

"At all events," said Lord Beauchamp, examining the pair with some interest, "I can answer for her present cavalier being safe; for he is my brother. And as for the young lady, whose beauty is certainly quite ravishing, her mother and her affianced have, I will dare swear, the best of reasons for being tranquil on her account. You compared her to an archangel; I am sure she has the air of angelic purity."

"Would you say less of her sister there, Miladi Editta? And yet she only failed, as I have heard, to make a terrible scandal before marriage. Methinks that might teach her lady-mother caution."

"You couldn't have cited a case less in point, cara duchessa." Augustus went into Edith's history at length; explained a Scotch marriage, and considering that he was a Catholic, defended its validity with some warmth.

"You must be her sworn knight," said the duchessa.

Clifford had promised himself the pleasure of dancing with Lady Alice after supper; but his serene kinsman, the Duke of Saxe-Kleinenburg, claimed her hand. Alice had barely recovered her breath and the steadiness of her head, and was placing her hand on Frederick's shoulder, when Lord Wessex interposed. Her mother had desired him to find her and escort her to the shawl-room, as they were going.

"Mr. Clifford will wish to make his adieus to mamma," said Alice, with a heightened color. "We will all go to the shawl-room together;" and she placed the hand which had rested on his shoulder within his arm.

They had to go to the Princess Santisola first, for Lady Alice to take leave of her highness. Partly commiserating his rival, partly influenced by a far-reaching prudence, which in this instance gave him a timely though fruitless warning, Clifford took the opportunity of whispering—"Take his arm, dear Alice."

"Not for the world," she replied.

She however spoke to the marquis. Frederick admired her tact and girlish courage. With other formidable idiosyncrasies, Clifford possessed a preternatural quickness of ear; and in the princess' cabinet, conversing with her fa-

ther, amid all the monotonous clatter of foreign tongues, while Alice and Lord Wessex were approaching them, not one of the latter's veiled whispers, not one of the former's modulated inflexions, had escaped him; so that he was quite aware of the marquis's failure. What the young lady now spoke of was their setting off in the morning, which rendered it necessary to go away, as she had just told the princess, at so early an hour. It mattered little to the rest, but Edith could ill bear to be deprived of her accustomed repose.

"Otherwise, dear Frederick," she added in an under tone, yet audible, "I would have ventured on one waltz, notwithstanding mamma's summons."

Before Lord Wessex had time to ask himself the meaning of this, they had reached the room where the rest of their party were waiting for Alice. Colonel D'Eyncourt held in readiness a little mantle of white silk lined with pink and trimmed with Brussels lace. In an instant it was placed on her shoulders, the hood over her head, and her starry eyes sparkling through the veil. Her mother shook hands with Clifford cordially, repeating her invitation to St. Valerie for Christmas. Alice leaned on his arm, confidently as a sister, as they descended the grand staircase.

CHAPTER VI.

At an early hour of the morning which succeeded the re-union at the Palazzo Santisola, indications of an important departure about to take place might be observed at the Hotel de la Ville at Milan. As many as six traveling carriages of various builds were successively run out in front of the hotel. They were already packed. Servants were busy changing and re-changing certain minute arrangements. This continued about half an hour. It was now six o'clock, and although many of the shops were not opened, the streets had the bustling animation which belongs to the summer morning in the cities of the south. There were citizens going to market, and girls fetching water, dressed in neat printed jackets and dark petticoats, their heads uncovered except by their own well-arranged and shining dark hair. There were peasants with baskets on their heads, or driving donkeys that tottered along under enormous panniers laden with fruit and vegetables.

On the side of the broad strada opposite the hotel, in the door-way of one of the closed shops, was an individual enveloped in a large blue cloak, and having a broad-brimmed straw hat of the country drawn over his eyes. He watched with seeming carelessness the operations proceeding about the carriages. As the great clock of the Duomo struck six, a female passed out from the great entrance of the hotel, and proceeded down the street, in the direction of the Piazza. The stranger's eye pursued her figure as it glanced behind the screen of carriages, till emerging beyond them she came fairly in sight. The back of her bonnet, her shawl, and the extremity of her robe were all that was visible, except a profusion of bright

ringlets that escaped from under her Tuscan. The stranger started, and after a look at the hotel, to see that he was not observed, proceeded slowly in the same direction, but keeping the opposite side of the street.

The bright ringlets were gently shaken as their owner moved on rapidly, lifting a little her ample garments as she walked. When she arrived in sight of the Duomo, she crossed the street, evidently to see the cathedral to better advantage, and held on her way with an unslackened pace, and looking at the vast pile, on that side deeply blackened by the weather and by time, but crowned by fret-work pinnacles and minarets of snowy whiteness, now sparkling in the morning sun like Alpine summits. As soon as she got abreast of the cathedral front, she re-crossed the street, and entered the north door. The individual in the blue cloak and broad-brimmed *pagliotto*, who, in consequence of her crossing the street was now, though walking slowly, close behind her, as soon as she had entered, crossed over too, and entered by the same portal.

The lady was at the *bénitier*. She dipped the tip of her finger in the holy water, crossed herself in the usual way, and moved on. Her movements had lost the graceful liberty which might have suited either youth or coquetry. Her hands were modestly crossed, and the flowing skirts of her robe swept the pavement. She looked down the beautiful north aisle; she passed, between the mighty pillars, into the nave; she stopped, and her eye wandered down the line of sculptured shafts, and up to the richly-groined vaulting of the roof they sustained.

Within the far gloom of the choir, two candles were lighted on the high altar, and a priest was saying low mass. A bell announced the consecration. The lady instantly knelt, and when the bell announced the finished consecration of the chalice, rose, walked up the nave to the benches where a small congregation of both sexes were hearing mass, passed in among them, knelt, crossed herself, and remained in a posture of devout attention.

"*Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater, + et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.*"

The lady crossed herself at the benediction, and rose. During the concluding gospel she continued standing; but where the incarnation of the Blessed Word is mentioned, as the priest bent the knee, she also made a genuflexion with the grace of habit. When all was finished, she knelt again, and remained some time in prayer. Several old women who had knelt near her now extended their skinny palms; she seemed prepared for it, and gave each a small piece of money. The loud bell of the sacristy announced the approach of another priest, and the commencement of another mass. She turned to pass out from the benches, and immediately perceived the individual who had followed her.

"You are maternal in every sense of the word, dear Alice," he said, taking her hand with fraternal familiarity. She blushed, but a look of innocent confidence almost instantly succeeded to that of embarrassment.

"I have been in the habit of hearing an early mass at the Duomo ever since we arrived in Milan."

"And, naturally, you wished to make another last visit to the *Duomo* itself."

Before the *grille* of the choir they stopped together. The next mass was at a side altar.

"Do you know," continued Clifford, "that I am surprised to find you so good a Catholic."

"A daughter of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of England should be a good Catholic."

"But I should not have expected her to conform so exactly to our usages. Had not I known who you were, I should have taken you for a devout and well-instructed Milanese."

"My uncle Herbert has taken care," said Alice, "that I should never be prevented by ignorance from joining in Christian worship."

"Perhaps I do wrong to say such things to you; but does not your own ritual seem tame and naked after ours?"

"If my mother," said Alice, "were not so beautiful and interesting as the mother of one of my friends, I should still love her a great deal more. But our rite, too, is beautiful. I own," she added, her eyes gazing into his with child-like fearlessness, "that I weep sometimes over the wall of Zion that is broken down, and when I can't help seeing the marks of the spoiler in the very sanctuary. And there are those, dear Frederick, who are doing something more than weep; who have begun to rebuild. Even I hope to aid, one of these days, in so holy an enterprise."

Surprised at this language, he made no reply, and she expressed a wish to go behind the choir, and look once more at the painted windows. In this retired part of the church, seated on a bench, placed against the lofty stone screen of the choir, and a little apart from each other, they could inspect without difficulty the immense series of scriptural subjects that flooded the panes. Alice took the pleasure of a child in recognizing the different scenes, and tracing from compartment to compartment the sequence of the history. She appeared to feel no more awkwardness in being alone with him, than if she had been a girl of twelve years. It seemed that she had so recently emerged from childhood as to make it easy for her to relapse into its untroubled familiarity. And toward Clifford, somehow, the feminine impulse of timidity, the coy instincts of maiden reserve, were lulled. She at the same time loved him, and was conscious of being loved by him, and yet could sit by his side, or put her hand in his, with a sister's tranquillity. She was quieted by what would have disturbed one less innocent—the present existence of an obstacle that seemed to her insurmountable.

But did it not occur to Alice what others might think of this frank behavior? If it did, she had a fearless spirit that led her to think of it lightly. A physical organization originally almost perfect, and an imagination rarely gifted; elastic limbs, a springing shape, a conscious gracefulness; her youth, which had yet no experience of evil, her cultivated mind, accomplishments, sense of her own worth; her filial loyalty, her piety, made her fearless. In short, she was a healthy character—a brave, intelligent, and virtuous girl. What should she fear, or whom? She feared and trusted Almighty God.

In fact, our Alice had been imbued with cer-

tain superstitious ideas which to her were not a source of cowardice. She believed in the intercession of saints—the watchful presence of guardian angels. This persuasion had taken so deep a root in her imagination, that she had really the feeling of never being wholly alone. In her mind's eye, a witness, chaste as the courts of Heaven and irresistible as its armies, was ever about her path and about her bed, and spying out all her ways.

"Do you observe, Mr. Clifford," said Alice, "how cold and crude these windows are in color? So different from York Minster. Do you remember those brilliant lancets, and that splendid eastern light—the rich tints of its lower portions passing into the pure, zenith-like, delicate purples of the tracery above? By twilight it is so beautiful; it is like heaven opening?"

"To think of all the wonders of religious art once existent in England, which a barbarous fanaticism has destroyed!"

"Yes," said Alice, with an expression of sadness succeeding to the animation of the moment before; "but it is better, don't you think, dear Frederick, to break the beautiful windows than to pervert holy doctrines, and rob us of the consolations that God intended us to have?"

"And who, Alice, do you think, has done so?"

"I was thinking," said Alice, rising to go, "of my own church. I mean, that she has suffered worse things than the defacing of her sanctuaries."

When they came again in front of the choir, Lady Alice, quite as a matter of course, knelt for a few moments at the *grille*. At the *bénitier* Frederick dipped the tip of his fingers, and offered them to his companion. She touched them, with a smile. He begged to accompany her back to the hotel.

"You are very courageous, I observe," he said.

"Indeed, you have reason to say that I am rash," said Alice, blushing. "But mamma says that we must run some risks of life, and even of innocence; how much more of encountering some slight rudeness which can not really harm us. To be brave and free is worth a venture. I hope that is not an unfeminine thought."

"It is a spirited and beautiful one, and you are a beautiful and spirited character, dear Alice. As for your mother—I have seen all courts and nearly all countries, and never before heard of such a woman."

"You have traveled a great deal?"

"It has been my university."

"Ah, I should like so much to travel by myself, and meet with all sorts of adventures."

"Wherever you go—Iddio t'accompagni!" he said, as they approached the hotel. It was the first language in which they had ever exchanged words. Alice seemed to be reminded of it, for she blushed again, and her face of girlish beauty assumed an expression of serious tenderness, that made her look in a moment all womanly, as she replied, "I am sorry to part."

She gave him her hand, as an innocent girl might be supposed to do, who remembered that he had once imprinted a kiss, tender and pure as a mother's on her cheek.

"Shall I give your compliments to mamma?"

"By all means, dearest Alice."

Ere they meet again, what changes will have come over the spirit of her who is now so child-like, yet so serious! Frederick Clifford, at twenty-three, will hardly alter, but who can predict the future of that now guileless but impressible nature of the girl of seventeen, standing on the threshold of womanhood? Alice has the three worldly advantages that women chiefly covet—beauty, rank, and wealth—and all in the highest degree. We may therefore reckon confidently on her success in the world. But who can answer for her truth, her purity, or her constancy? Are we to behold that matchless flower lose its whiteness and fragrance, like the lily of last night's banquet, which is this morning thrown discolored and scentless from the golden vase of which it was the glory?

CHAPTER VII.

It was on one of the sultriest days of August, that the six carriages before-mentioned had been for nearly two hours ascending the Simplon. The blinds were drawn, to exclude the sun and hot reflections from the road and the wall of rock against which it wound. The lackeys on the outside slumbered on their lofty and well-protected perches. A light chariot which led the train was occupied by two gentlemen in earnest converse.

These were the Duke of Lennox and the Marquis of Wessex. It seemed that the subject of their colloquy had not been agreeable to either. It might have been partly the effect of the green silk blinds, but Lord Wessex looked pale. His brow was contracted; his eyes betrayed a jealous, even malignant excitement. The duke was also visibly disconcerted, if not displeased; although it would appear that his companion was not the object, however he might be the cause of that displeasure.

"I assure you," said his grace, "that I take it as particularly kind in you, and not at all officious—your telling me this. Indeed, considering the expressed wishes of my poor boy in regard to his sister, you have a sort of right."

The disturbance of the father of Alice may be partly understood, when we mention that Lord Wessex had observed from his window our friend Frederick take up his position—with some apparent imprudence, it must be allowed—in front of their hotel at Milan on the morning of the departure of the Lennox family from that city. Even in his coarse *pagliotto*, and with his ample cloak wrapped about him, Clifford had sufficiently an air of distinction to strike so practiced an observer, whose jealousy suggested a tormenting suspicion. When presently Mademoiselle Clairvoix's voice, singing French airs in her mistress's apartment, which was contiguous to his own, informed him that Alice had gone out alone, and when he saw his supposed rival immediately after quit his post, and proceed in the direction of the cathedral, that suspicion became certainty.

The marquis had followed them; had witnessed, unobserved, the interview in the Duomo, with all the signs of intimacy by which it was accompanied, even to the tender farewell of our

young friends on regaining the hotel. He had encountered Clifford as the latter turned away from Alice, but Frederick, though observant to a proverb, was at the moment so absorbed as to pass him without notice.

When this was related to the duke, with the coloring that a rival was perhaps unavoidably impelled to give, and further explained by aid of the expression which Alice had openly employed in addressing Frederick the night before at the Santisola Palace, it was alone enough to startle a father, who, if he dreaded any thing in the world, dreaded his daughter's becoming a Roman Catholic, or (what amounted in his opinion to the same thing) ever wishing to marry one. Apart from which, no man likes his daughters, especially when very young, to be clandestinely wooed; and this had an awkward appearance of it.

"Lady Alice is a great matrimonial prize," said the marquis. "A younger son, of good family, and who is generally admitted to be the handsomest young man in Europe, would of course speculate upon the chances of success in such a quarter. Lady Alice's well-known religious predilections present a ready means of access to her sympathies. She is known to be very imaginative and enthusiastic, which is very charming in her. Adventurers of this sort know how to take advantage of this kind of thing. For my part, I have no doubt they came to Milan on purpose, and that the vesper scene at the Duomo, where, as I was telling your grace, we first saw them, was got up with this view. Their coming in, and kneeling among the crowd, and their fine singing, were all extremely well imagined—extremely well!"

"Lord Beauchamp can hardly be called an adventurer," said the duke, who, even when so much disturbed, could not be unjust.

In fact, the father of Alice had better grounds for the apprehensions to which this information gave an alarming point. His grace had never thoroughly approved the decided bias given by Mr. Courtenay to the religious opinions of his children, although, partly restrained by a promise made to his wife before marriage, partly won by the beauty of Herbert's piety, unable to deny that his children grew up, under such a training, full of filial duty and moral loveliness, he had ever confined himself to expressing, with great gentleness, his fears for the result. He had even himself conformed to the Episcopal Church of Scotland, and endeavored as much as possible to blend his sympathies with those of a wife whom he loved to adoration, and a family that daily became more his joy and pride.

The duke's anxiety had been greatly increased since their arrival in Italy, by the passionate enthusiasm of his daughter Alice for the majesty of worship in the Roman Church, and the exaltation of spirit with which she visited its beautiful sanctuaries. The many means of grace, the practices of piety, the devout and edifying usages which abound in the Roman Church, took a still deeper hold on a heart essentially religious, and steadily practical, amid all her apparent poetical enthusiasm. The first serious request of his daughter that the duke ever perhaps refused, was one for his permission to spend a week in a spiritual retreat in the convent of Santa Trinità dei Monti. As descended by her mother from

the royal house of France, she had been introduced there by a French lady of high rank, and received by the nuns with infinite courtesy. Subsequently she had very often attended the *Prière du Soir* in the beautiful convent church, so celebrated in Rome for the almost unearthly singing of the nuns. But what had most attracted Lady Alice was the Sunday vespers in the royal French church of San Luigi dei Francesi, during Advent and Lent, and the discourses that followed the service by the pious and eloquent Abbé de B——.

This fine church has a college of canons, who chant the psalms to the Gregorian tones. The congregation, consisting chiefly of the French visiting or resident at Rome, have the delightful habit of joining in the chant. That simple, yet noble style of church music, so truly ecclesiastical, to which she had also been accustomed from infancy, pleased Alice more than the most wonderful performances of the Sistine choir; and the congregational singing, in which she constantly joined, gave her the feeling of Christian fellowship.

And when, at the close of such a service, the young Englishwoman bowed herself among the prostrate crowd at the benediction of the Sacrament, in adoration of Him whom she believed, as they, to be mystically and especially present, she almost entirely forgot that she did not belong to the Roman communion.

These things, it is to be supposed, were talked of in Rome—the most gossiping English colony on the Continent. The Sunday vespers at San Luigi were at such an hour that by leaving the English chapel immediately after Even Song, without waiting for afternoon sermon, the ten minutes' drive by the Ripetta and della Scrofa, brought in Lady Alice, attended by her French maid, a Roman Catholic, in season to take their seats quietly among the earliest of the congregation, on the fleur-de-lys carpet of the French embassy—where chairs were always placed for this maid of a royal house, with ample time for recollection and private devotion before the entrance of the ministrant and the canons. Several English ladies who regularly entered the English chapel after the commencement of morning service, who never even by chance were present at that of the evening, probably with the charitable intention of leaving more room for their servants, and on Sacrament Sundays never staid for the more solemn portion of the rite, found the conduct of Lady Alice Stuart, in going out in the afternoon before the sermon, monstrously *inconvenable*. Yet it was very quietly done. The chancel, at that time, was in the body of the chapel, and behind it was a space that in the thin afternoon congregation was left entirely vacant. Here Lady Alice sat, and could retire by a side door without its being perceived, except by those who were purposely on the watch to observe her departure.

Other ladies still, who left the English service on Easter and Palm Sunday (which Lady Alice did not) to gaze, without intelligence or devotion, at the grand ceremonies of St. Peter's, as at a puppet-show on a great scale; who listened to the Miserere of Allegri as they would to a cavatina in a tragic opera, who scrambled for places in the Sistine, and profaned by levity and postures without even the semblance of external

reverence, the most solemn rites of the religion they themselves professed, and the holy places revered by Christendom; these ladies—great ladies, some of them—were scandalized that an English girl, nurtured in habits of reverence for holy things, and of a scrupulous regard for the feelings of others, should kneel in the house of God, should join her voice to that of her fellow-Christians in chanting the psalms of David, or anthems taken word for word from Holy Scripture, or an inspired canticle that forms part of our own service; that she should whisper her *Amen* to prayers which are the originals of our own collects; or bow her head to receive the benediction of a priest, whose sacerdotal character is recognized by our own rubric.

Gossip of this sort would possibly have given little concern to the brave young Lady Alice, had it reached her ears, which it did not, but it annoyed very much the duke. Apart from apprehensions from which he was not wholly free, that she might really end by embracing Romanism, he feared, with reason, to see his daughter's name, though by a false and malicious report, going the rounds of the English papers as a new "convert to Popery." His pride and delicacy were alike wounded at the bare idea of the notoriety which such a report and its formal contradiction would inflict. The father of Alice had flattered himself that the admiration of Lord Wessex, a young nobleman so universally courted, allowed to be handsome, immensely rich, and the mirror of fashion, would effect a powerful diversion in the mind of his daughter; were it even in favor of some worldly vanities, would not much matter. When to all this was added the marquis's strong claims in virtue of her brother's wishes, the duke thought he could scarcely fail to win her hand, a result deemed in all respects desirable, and which would relieve the friends of the young heiress from a thousand anxieties. In fact, the duke regretted the eccentric will of his eldest son, less on account of the alienation from his line of a great ancestral property, than of the interested assiduities to which it would expose a girl already sufficiently attractive, and of the vast responsibility which the possession of so great wealth, in her own unrestricted right, inevitably devolved on one whose sex and tender years unfitted her to sustain it. His daughter, indeed, was thus removed from her state of natural dependence on her parents, and rendered effectively her own mistress. In fine, Lady Alice, though obedient from a child, had already given indications of a character, not only ardent and susceptible, but resolute and independent. In her life she had never disobeyed her father or her mother; but with every body else she would, and she did, have her own way always.

Altogether, then, it will not be difficult to conceive the vexation of this kind and anxious father at hearing from Lord Wessex himself, not only that a formal offer on his part (which the duke internally blamed as premature) had been decidedly rejected by Lady Alice, but that an intimacy, most singular, and truth to say, unwarrantable, had grown up, as it were, in a single night, between his daughter and a young Roman Catholic gentleman of extraordinary personal beauty and uncommonly fascinating address; and if of a very high family, yet on that

account a more dangerous pretender to his daughter's favor, and more committed to a faith to which that family were notoriously devoted. The more he meditated on this last circumstance, the more his heart misgave him; and Lord Wessex's suggestion of a plan for the perversion of the young heiress seemed not at all improbable. It was certainly time for the father to interfere with authority, if it were not, as he had reason to fear, already too late.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE interior of the last carriage of the train was charmingly fitted up. Its silken linings were indeed at this season covered with unbleached linen, but an inlaid floor was a luxury in an Italian summer. Some richly-bound volumes reposed on a table of ivory and mother-of-pearl, which played on rods of silver. The rose-colored blinds were drawn down, and made a soft twilight in this moving boudoir, which was occupied by the Ladies Edith D'Eyncourt and Alice Stuart, to the latter of whom it belonged.

These beautiful sisters did not resemble each other. Edith had her mother's chestnut hair, exquisitely fair complexion, and delicate aquiline profile. From her father she derived the dark-blue eye, of which eight years of wedlock had not altered either the purity or the tenderness.

Alice might have inherited from the duke the color of her radiant tresses. Soft as the curls of an infant, the masses of fine hair that, parted in a clear white line from the forehead to the crown, defined, by a glossy surface of satin and gold, the perfect mold of her beautiful head; then, just avoiding the delicate shell of an ear which it would have been a sin to hide, descended to her shoulders in a luxuriance without parallel. Combed out straight, it would have reached nearly to her waist; but scarcely would that have been possible, and amid its thick profusion of clustering and sunny ringlets, you caught, ever and anon, that deep tone of rich auburn in which the old Venetian painters delighted.

Her eyebrow, of which the grand symmetrical arch might have been penciled with Indian ink; the long convexity of her fringed eyelid; her eye, large as a prophet's, dark yet liquidly soft as the well where truth lies hid, and its earnest, soul-like glance, were an apotheosis of her mother. But the straight nose, harmonizing so perfectly with the face that you must have made an effort to observe its Phidian root, and the refined carving of its delicate nostril; the small mouth, short upper lip; the twain formed like the bow of Cupid, and of that expressive sweetness which marks an impassioned character, yet controlled by a divine purity, such as Raphael bestowed on the immortal Madonna di San Sisto; these were all her own.

The head and face of Alice were small, and to say that the latter was a faultless oval would be true enough, but faintly suggests the indescribable softness of its containing curve. The chin, of perfect form, had a dimple in its polished convexity, which the chisel of Praxiteles or the finger of Venus might have imprinted, and that small, sweet mouth, when she smiled or talked,

disclosed the most beautiful little pearly teeth in the world.

No single epithet could do justice to the soft gradations of color in Alice Stuart's complexion. She was not fair, yet somehow her forehead was dazzling; still less was she dark, yet her cheek was in harmony with the dark-brown lashes that drooped over it. Such clearness and splendor as met in her face you may see in the heaven through which a Greek sunrise has poured its transparent hue; where the white crescent of the moon, and the silver cresset of the morning star still glitter, and contend with the blended rose and pearl of the zenith, the brown and gold of a floating cloud, and the rich flush of the horizon.

Alice had laid aside her hat, shawl, and gloves. She was half reclining in the corner of the chariot, naturally thrown backward by the ascent. The velvet cushion of an ivory footstool yielded to the pressure of her pretty feet, and half disappeared under her skirts. She was reading, and held the small volume in one hand, supporting the elbow with the other. Her cheek was flushed with excitement, and occasionally a smile of merriment or serious pleasure played on her beautiful lip. Edith looked at her, from time to time, with an air of amusement and wonder.

Alice closed the little volume, tossed it on the table, and laughed aloud, clapping her pretty hands, as in applause.

"Bravo!" she cried. "Ah, that dear Consuelo! To get safely to Vienna, after all her perils. Edith, that's just the way I should like to travel, on my own feet, and with some faithful comrade, like Haydn, to give our adventures the zest of sympathy. Can any thing be more tiresome than to roll through life in a silk-lined chariot like this?"

"How would you like laying aside the dress of your sex, as Consuelo was obliged to do?" asked Lady Edith, with a very mischievous smile.

"Shocking!" said Alice. "But it is very charming in fiction, don't you think?"

"Well, even in fiction, I don't like to meet such improprieties."

"How Rosalind, and the noble Imogen, and Tasso's Clorinda, must scandalize you, dear Edith! Now I remember that after reading the 'Gerusalemme,' I wanted to be Clorinda; only, instead of a pagan, I would have been a fair crusader."

"La bella arciera i suoi nemici attende,"

said Alice, half singing the musical line.

"And, like Clorinda, you include an unhappy lover among your enemies," rejoined Edith. "That poor Lord Wessex!"

"I hope, at least, he will not kill me, as Tancredi did his warrior mistress," said Alice, smiling.

"I fear that you have a spice of coquetry in your disposition, Ally," said the matron sister, with a very serious expression. "It is a sin, remember, to trifle with the happiness of others."

Alice twisted her watch-chain round her little finger, and then untwisted it somewhat impatiently: but she replied, with sweetness—

"I hope I shall never trifle with any one's

happiness, if I ever have the power; but I *must* take care of my own, you know."

"If Lord Wessex had not been chosen for you beforehand, I am sure you would have liked him."

"What a provoking thing to say, my dear Edith! No, I assure you, he is not at all the person I could ever have fancied."

Edith put her arm round her sister's waist, kissed her, laughed at her, and after some teasing, got her to explain her ideal of a lover. He was to be very handsome, of course, Alice admitted, and in the most "intellectual" style, as Edith suggested; but not pale, Alice said; not dark; clear as a statue, and with the same august serenity. He should have English blood and breeding—the highest.

"I see him already."

Then he should be young enough for Alice to be his first love; not so young but that she might revere him. She confessed, with a blush, that the age of twenty-three was precisely that which fulfilled these conditions.

"And now for his moral qualities."

"There should be that in his manner," said Alice, "which will assure me, by the inexplicable confidence it inspires, that his heart is as pure, that his life has been as chaste as my own."

"Charming! But, my dearest Alice, I ought to tell you that such a perfect being as you describe does not exist."

"Yet I have made you a portrait," said Alice, with a cheek indignantly glowing to hear such a denial.

"You mean Lord Beauchamp's brother," said Edith, after a pause duly given to her astonishment.

"Ah, you recognize the likeness," said the younger sister, with a mixture of embarrassment and triumph. Edith blushed.

"It seems to me that you have almost acknowledged that you are—in love with him—at first sight."

Alice did not deny it.

"And pray, has Mr. Clifford, on so short an acquaintance, ventured to insinuate that he is in love with you?" demanded Edith, suspiciously.

"No," said Alice, hesitatingly.

"I trust, at least, he does not suspect the sort of regard you entertain for him."

"I fear he does, and more than suspect it," said Alice, with a furtive smile. "At the same time," she added, with gravity, "you must do Frederick justice. His manner to me is not at all that of a lover; but of a brother and a friend."

"Frederick!" said her sister.

"He calls me Alice."

"And pray how do *you* call *him*?"

"Sometimes 'Mr. Clifford,' but generally 'Frederick.' He began it," added Alice, with simplicity, seeing that Edith looked sincerely shocked.

"Does mamma know of all this?"

"I wonder, dearest Edith, that you can ask such a question. I shall never have any clandestine loves, you may depend."

This was a thrust that the sage and matronly Edith could not immediately parry. While she meditated a reply, the carriage stopped; and

the door was presently opened by Colonel D'Eyncourt, who invited them to descend, to look at the celebrated Fall of the Frascinodi. Alice made an exclamation of delight as she sprang out of the chariot. In her haste, she forgot her bonnet, but the rock, happily, threw a strong shadow over the road. The cascade flashed in the sunlight, and fell through a brilliant mist-bow into a shadowy abyss. Alice called for her portfolio, which a tall footman brought with zealous haste. She rested it on the stone parapet, and began putting in a sketch of the view with that rapidity and infallible command of means which even talent acquires only as the result of laborious practice. Edith touched her arm. "There," she said, "is something for you. Wouldn't you like to join the party who are now approaching?"

Seven or eight young men, of whom the eldest might have counted five-and-twenty years, were issuing from the dark entrance of the frowning gallery before them. They were dressed in rich and fanciful costumes. Tunics of fine cloth, of various colors, chiefly light, embroidered with silver or crimson silk, with open sleeves and brilliant sashes. Their slouched hats were decorated with bright plumes, and some with garlands. Their long hair flowed upon their shoulders. One had curls, black as night; another a profusion of straight yellow locks, shining like gold. They bore in their hands long pilgrim staves. They took off their hats with great deference when they saw the English ladies.

"Who can they be?" demanded Alice, with vivacity, of Colonel D'Eyncourt.

"A pedestrian party of German students, or still more probably, artists."

CHAPTER IX.

"WHAT a beautiful girl!"

This exclamation was made in German. Two of the strangers—he of the yellow hair, and a very young man with glossy black curls and a face like a handsome brunette—had approached Alice near enough to get a sight of her drawing. On the continent it is not thought an impertinence to look over the shoulder, even of a young lady artist.

"And, by the genius of the fatherland!" cried the same speaker, "she is making a capital sketch, too. Wonderful to see a pencil so managed by such a little snowy hand, and shaded by that rich lace. I declare it is a picture in itself."

"Hush! perhaps she understands you," said his companion, in a lower tone.

"What if she did? Compliments in a foreign language never give offense. But the young English lady evidently does not understand a word, or she would not look so unconscious."

A slight smile, arch and mocking, but evanescent as a glancing sunbeam, played on the fair sketcher's lip.

"Were she German I would speak to her," said the young man, in a lower tone. "But the English are so very reserved; one never knows what etiquette one may be violating."

The traveling costume of Lady Alice offered

certain indications of character. It was the same full-skirted habit which she had worn on her matin visit to the Duomo. The jacket, long-waisted and fitting closely to her shape, was very much enriched, as well on the sleeves as at the neck and down the front, with dark brown braid. The well-turned throat rose from a small collar of the same rich lace which the young German had noticed as picturesquely shading the beautiful hand. The material of the dress itself—a fine, soft fabric from the looms of France—was of that delicate shade which ladies call ashes of roses, and in an artistical point of view, rendered more effective by contrast, the dazzling complexion and bright floating hair of the wearer. Perhaps the yellow-haired German recognized a sort of freemasonry in all this, for he ventured to address her.

"I can scarcely doubt than I see a member of our fraternity, I was going to say, mademoiselle, forgetting your sex in your talent; but an artist certainly?" he said.

"If you mean a professional artist, monsieur, certainly not; I am merely an amateur. But I thank you for the compliment."

Alice had arrested her pencil, and frankly regarded the young stranger during her reply. This sign of a civilized nature encouraged him.

"Your sketch and manner of using your pencil, would do credit to any of us, mademoiselle, however practiced. But I would suggest that the view itself, striking as it is in nature, is not the best you could have chosen to put in evidence your remarkable talent. No doubt you have in your portfolio many others, of widely different scenes."

Lady Alice smiled but was so obliging as to turn over several leaves to a view of Rome, with a quiet reach of the Tiber, from a point below the city.

"Ah, that is beautiful!" cried the stranger.

"*Schön! sehr schön!*" cried his dark-haired companion.

"Really mademoiselle," continued the same speaker as before, scanning rather earnestly, but respectfully, that youthful and charming physiognomy, "had not I been witness of your facility, and did I not recognize your handling, I could not have believed that this was done by a young lady and an amateur."

Alice began to color, for one or two others had come up, and the expressions of admiration were somewhat animated; while, speaking a language which they did not give her credit for understanding, they exclaimed at her own beauty with even more enthusiasm than at that of her drawing. Edith, however, stood at her left hand, and at a little distance she caught the eye of Colonel D'Eyncourt, who was evidently amused.

"Since the young lady is so extremely good," said the young man, who had only spoken in German, and still employed that language, "perhaps she would show us something else."

This was addressed to his companion, but Alice turned carelessly over several leaves more.

"Oh, please let us see that—the group," said the same speaker. "I perceive that you understand German, mademoiselle."

"A little," said Alice.

This was richly colored; the back ground, a lake embosoming a verdant and flowery islet; in

the fore-ground, moored to the reedy bank, a boat formed like a shell. In it stood a youthful genius with dark, clear limbs, of delicate symmetry, and small wings, of vivid plumage. He leaned upon a classic oar, and regarded you with a look of tender melancholy. On either edge sat a beautiful female, having a musical instrument of antique shape. The one played and sang with a winning look of invitation; the other arranged the golden collar and azure traces of one of the dusk-white swans, by which the boat should be drawn along, but which now floating at their ease, indicated the absence of occupation for their elegant ferry.

"I call it," said Alice, blushing, "'Waiting in vain for passengers to the Happy Islands.'"

"Yes," said the fair-haired young man, whom the rest called Lehmann, and Heinrich, "but this is wonderful!"

"*Himmel!*" exclaimed, with excitement, the youth of the raven locks.

"If I might suggest a fault, mademoiselle," said Heinrich Lehmann, "it is that the genius a graceful, exquisite form, it is true, is too evidently from the antique. Beautifully accurate, but wanting in flexibility. I should say you had done it from a statue."

"That is precisely the fact, monsieur."

The young men now took possession of the portfolio. The dark-haired artist turned it over for the rest, saying—

"I am sure you will not refuse us that pleasure, *gnädiges Fräulein.*"

Closely interlocked, with arms over each other's shoulders, or round each other's waists, they all managed to see. Alice was almost among them, but quite at her ease, listening partly to their comments, partly observing, with a quiet eye, their grouped and animated visages. There was another ideal group that elicited warm praise and more wonder than any thing, though it was now more tranquilly expressed. It was Christ and the woman who touched the hem of his garment, with several Apostles and the multitude thronging Him. The composition was of formal simplicity but some of the female heads were singularly beautiful.

"The truth is, you have genius," said Heinrich Lehmann, who was still the principal speaker. "All this is imitative and inexperienced, but I recognize the plastic finger of genuine art."

He took her pencil from her hand with the familiarity of long intimacy, and drawing the unsharpened end over several figures, he continued—"The bent of your genius is for expression, by means of the human form, which is certainly the finest vehicle of all thoughts; but with all the mechanical facility in the world, and yours seems unlimited, you can not draw from previous art the means of expressing the ideas invented by yourself. For that you must go to nature: every artist must; and it is not easy to see how you can—as a young lady."

"No," said Alice very gravely and tranquilly, "it is not easy. I fear it is impossible."

Meanwhile her father and the duchess had approached and listened to this conversation, which being in German, neither understood. The last drawing had been looked at, and Lehmann, turning to his companions, said—

"We must not trespass further on mademoiselle's good nature."

They drew back and uncovered.

"I believe the postillions are waiting, my child," said the duke, returning the salute of the young men.

"We shall not soon forget you, mademoiselle," said the fair-haired artist, as, having secured the clasps of Lady Alice's portfolio, he gave it into the hands of a servant.

"We kiss your hand," said his dark-haired friend, who, with his hat off, looked like the pictures of Raphael. "We kiss your hand, *Fräulein* and *Fürstinn!* for we perceive," he added, "that you are a princess."

Alice saluted them with a deep courtesy. Her friends also bowed; the duchess, graciously; the duke politely; Lord Wessex haughtily; Colonel D'Eyncourt good-naturedly and making a military salute; his wife with a placid surprise on her fair high-bred countenance. They gained their carriages and had very soon disappeared in the gallery by which the road is carried to the gorge of Gondo.

"What a chivalrous adieu!" said Lady Edith.

"Quite," said Alice. "Did you observe Lehmann smile?"

"Lehmann!" said Lady Edith.

"And he detected at once that I did that from a statue," said Alice, blushing vividly, and opening again her portfolio, and raising one of the blinds, she contemplated her beautiful and imaginative design with a disappointed air. "I could do it better now," she said at last with animation; "I am sure I could."

"Well, your experience is not more extended than it was when you did this," said Edith, with a smile. "For my part I don't understand his saying that this is not a real youth. A statue is modeled from life, of course, and you draw from the statue. There are two steps in the process instead of one. What difference can it make?"

"Oh, I understand the difference very well," said Alice, musingly.

In the afternoon the descent was made to Brieg, at a full trot. The train of carriages, sweeping round the zigzags, seemed rushing on destruction. The blinds were up and the glasses down, that their view might not be intercepted. Soon the distant peaks of the Bernese Alps, the snowy Jungfrau, the grand glacier of Aletsch, burst upon them. Even Lady Edith was quite excited; Alice was calm as a child; but from the sublime and glittering summits, seen across half Switzerland, to the broad valley of the Rhone, spreading map-like before them and walled in by the loftiest ranges in Europe, nothing escaped her dilating eyes.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING could be more delightful, ordinarily, than the reunion of the Lennox family, at what, in southern Europe, we may be allowed to call their supper, after the excitement and fatigue of a day's travel, during which its members had necessarily been separated.

The affectionate vivacity of Alice, and the serene fondness of her father; the serious good faith of Edith, on which the soul reposed; the lightning of the duchess's wit, that pierced you through and through without your being sensible

of a wound; D'Eyncourt's not extremely communicative, but candid and manly temper; the high culture of Herbert Courtenay, always evident, and occasionally his profound knowledge and subtle genius breaking forth in some eloquent sentence, or rapid yet searching analysis; there was scarcely one of these domestic symposia which did not deserve to be recorded. Neither did the presence of a stranger, as is often the case, throw an immediate constraint over this happy circle, whose manners, always ceremonious beyond what is generally observed, but never formal, realized at all times that beautiful art of social life which is now almost a tradition.

It may be supposed that Lord Wessex, a nobleman doubtless of great refinement, but who had never witnessed any thing exactly parallel to this, must have enjoyed extremely the opportunity now afforded him of really knowing a family so interesting.

But on the evening that they dined at the Brieg post-house, after the passage of the Simplon during the day, an unusual restraint, and indicative that something, somewhere, was out of joint, manifested itself among our friends. The duke was the cause, by certain minute, but to delicate observers such as these, very appreciable departures from his wonted manner. One thing that threw a chill over the whole party, was his grace's calling his daughter, "My dear Alice," more than once. It used to be always, "Alice," or "Ally."

The duchess became silent: so did Edith; and had not Lord Wessex talked resolutely to D'Eyncourt, and Alice, after one or two vain attempts to soften her father by very engaging things she said, turned quietly to her uncle, and asked a question that drew Mr. Courtenay into a long, half-soliloquizing reply, the general awkwardness would have been very visible.

Alice expected, when she bade her mother good night, to be called into her room for an explanation, and when she received merely the accustomed embrace, somewhat carelessly bestowed, went to her own apartment in tears. We shall leave her to be consoled by the affectionate cares of her little French maid, who was "*désolée*" that her young mistress wept, and record the conversation between her noble parents, or so much of it as may be essential.

The duchess, quite prepared for bed, sate before her toilet-table, with her dressing-robe wrapt about her, and, leaning forward slightly on one elbow, listened to her husband's communication.

The duke stated the case with great fairness, as he had heard it from Lord Wessex, and concluded by saying, there could be no doubt that this young man was remarkable for his power of adapting himself to all sorts of dispositions, and had been particularly notorious for what is called "success," even at an early age.

The duchess reddened. "Charles, I don't—believe it."

The duke went into a number of anecdotes that showed, in his opinion, not only that the society to which Lord Beauchamp's brother had been early accustomed was far from strait-laced, but that Clifford himself was morally as unscrupulous, as intellectually he was subtle and personally captivating. All rested upon the same

authority indeed, that of a jealous rival, as the duke confessed; but then, where so much was so stoutly asserted, there must be some foundation.

"A spy," said the duchess, "in which character the most Honorable the Marquis of Wessex certainly appears—a spy—may very well be a liar."

"Oh, my dear Kate, that is too severe!"

"Yes, a spy and a tell-tale, Charles. To follow Alice to the church, and then report what he saw! I never heard of any thing meaner. Happily, Alice mentioned to me her meeting Mr. Clifford at the Duomo, and repeated as much as she could recall of their conversation. Parting with her, he left his compliments for me. So far was it from being clandestine."

"I trust the meeting was not a rendezvous," said his grace.

"She said that she had been surprised to see him," replied the duchess, drily.

"Why did he watch the hotel? Rather odd, I think."

"I have heard of young men doing such things from sentiment, without having any disingenuousness attributed to them for it. He is interested in her, no doubt."

"It is not Clifford alone who is interested; it is Alice," said the duke. "And I regret to say that her conduct in this instance does strike me as forward—almost indelicate. On so slight an acquaintance to call him by his christian name! If he drew her designedly into such a familiarity, it does more credit to his powers of insinuation, of which Wessex speaks, than to his good taste or his fairness."

The duke walked up and down the room. His wife sank back in her chair, and smoothed with her snowy and jeweled hand the bandeaux of dark hair that passed from her forehead under the lace fillet that shaded her muse-like countenance.

"I had always a perverse sympathy with the lover that fathers and guardians disapprove," she said at last, with one of her most provoking smiles.

"Well, this is a lover that I, as Alice's father and guardian too, do disapprove, most decidedly; and under no circumstances will I give my consent—"

"Forgive my interrupting you, my dear Charles," said his wife, now seriously; "do not say you will never give your consent, because I am sure you would give it if your child's happiness were at stake."

"At least," said the duke resolutely, "I shall take measures to prevent its ever being at stake, if possible."

"I fear it is no longer possible," rejoined the duchess, still more kindly. "A higher power than that of any earthly parent has anticipated in this instance the wishes and the plans which we might have formed. If you knew how Clifford and Alice first became acquainted, you would not be surprised at their intimacy; and I am sure you would not think her forward either, or him unfair."

"My children," said the duke, in a faltering voice, "withhold from me nothing but their confidence."

"You do Alice injustice in saying that," said the duchess, with sweetness. "In a girl, re-

member, reserve may spring from a modesty that you, I know, would be the first to respect. I have quite sympathized with Alice's wish to confine her confidences in this instance to her mother."

"This is connected, at last, with some proselyting enthusiasm, I suppose," said the duke, as if he were talking to himself.

"Not in the most remote degree," said the duchess. Then, after a pause, she added, in a lower voice, "But for his courage and promptitude, Alice would be at this moment beyond the reach of our cares, and no subject of our anxieties."

"Ah!"—The father's countenance instantly softened.

"That is a service that must endear a man to any woman," said the duchess, looking at her husband.

"My dear Kate, I believe it—but why conceal this from me?"

"Why, situated as Alice is—and it being so fine a young man who had laid her under such an obligation—and the knowledge of it having been confined in the first instance to themselves—it seemed better that it should rest so. And Alice wished it. But I always foresaw that an occasion would arrive for telling you the whole story, and you shall now judge whether Clifford's behavior is not just what it ought to be."

The duke was too fair not to admit, when he had heard his wife's story, that it was. Neither would he entertain for a moment the ungenerous suspicion that Clifford's presence at Vietri had been otherwise than accidental. He agreed that Alice could not have behaved more ingenuously and at the same time more discreetly, than she had. It was settled that she should be countenanced in her friendship for Clifford; and, if it led to something more than friendship, and he appeared to be personally worthy of her, that the parental sanction should not be withheld on the score merely of his religion. The duke allowed that the whole affair was providential, and that Alice, whatever their anxieties, must be left in it to the divine guidance, which they knew she habitually sought, and in which they all devoutly believed.

The next day our young heroine was glad to beguile the tediousness of the road to Martigny by finishing *CONSUELO*. She had read the fourth volume during the ascent of the Simplon. The perusal of the fifth was accompanied, at first, by tears; once or twice was interrupted by sobs. Toward the close she read with incredible rapidity. When she had finished the volume, before taking the sixth and last, she hid her face in her hands.

"It is only a story, remember," said Edith.

"Only a story! 'Tis the same to me as a reality. It makes me ashamed to read that last scene. I feel as if it had happened to myself."

"The life of an artist, you observe, exposes a woman to terrible dangers."

"I see," replied Alice, "why mamma permitted me to read this book, and, I suppose, why this passage was not crossed with ink, or the pages pinned together, like so many others, as unfit to meet my eye; yet I half wish it had been. It affects me like an omen. Strange things have happened to me already, Edith. My life will not flow like yours, in a sweet yet stately de-

corum. But from what quarter is to come the storm that menaces my happiness—perhaps my innocence? From what quarter, Edith?" she added, bursting into tears, "for at present my sky seems cloudless."

CHAPTER XI.

THE family were not reunited that day till they met at dinner, at Martigny. There was a proposal to divide the party at this place. The duke and duchess, with their younger children, were to go on to Geneva, where also two younger brothers of Alice, too young even for Eton, had been avoiding the heats of an Italian summer and pursuing their studies and boating exercise under the charge of a tutor. The parents desired to rejoin them. The rest of the party wished to cross, by one of the well-known mule routes of the Tête Noire or Col de Balme, to the vale of Chamouni.

To the surprise of every one, the duchess objected to Lady Alice's joining this expedition, though made chiefly for her gratification. Alice was so venturesome. She would be sure to get into one of the crevices of the Mer de Glace, or be thrown by her mule in descending from Montanvert. D'Eyncourt must look after his wife; Herbert could not accompany them to the Jardin, whither Alice particularly desired to go. Doubtless Lord Wessex would be gallantry itself, but on such occasions a woman needed the support of a husband or a brother. This was odd, because so contrary to the duchess's general system of fearless exposure. There was a feeling that it was connected with the duke's seeming displeasure of the evening previous, although her father was now most kind, called her "Ally" all the time, and was evidently making it up. All inclined to take her part. The young lady herself faintly blushed and remonstrated with hesitation.

"Were your friend 'Frederick,' of the party," said the duchess, with a kind smile, "I would trust you to him."

Lord Wessex glanced at the duchess, to see in what spirit this was uttered, and at Lady Alice, to observe what effect it produced. The young lady looked at her mother—a look half of ingenuous surprise, half of pleasure—blushing but not confused.

"When you met him at the Duomo that last morning, did he not speak of soon joining us?" pursued the duchess.

"No, mamma, he did not."

"I dare say not," said her mother, dryly.

"What Frederick is that, to whom you give a preference so flattering to Wessex, Herbert, and me?" asked D'Eyncourt.

"Lord Beauchamp's brother," said the duchess.

"A friend of Alice?" said D'Eyncourt.

"Why, he chanced to be present at one of her hair-breadth escapes, and conferred upon her an obligation that neither she nor any one that loves her can ever forget. However, we won't speak of it at present."

The face and neck of Lady Alice being of the color of a rose, enforced the hint of the duchess, and seemed to explain it. Edith's glance at her sister said, "I have found you out!" D'Eyncourt and her father took wine; the marquis

looked like a thunder-cloud, and Alice herself was the first to break the silence that ensued. It was to plead that in the Alps, as every body said, the professional guides alone were of any service. She could have two for herself; then she would be as safe as possible. On those conditions the duchess consented to her going.

Then rose the question of the route—by the Tête Noire or Col de Balme? the former offering the most picturesque series of defiles; the latter, the finest single view in Switzerland. Edith, who had once crossed by the Col de Balme, wished Alice to do the same. Her husband, on the contrary, thought the other pass should be taken as new to themselves, both being equally so to their sister. "Meanwhile, Wessex says nothing."

"I have no choice," said the marquis, "I have seen both."

"For that reason you are the most proper person to decide," said Alice, with a look of irresistible sweetness and invitation.

"Why, I should say the Tête Noire for ladies," said the marquis, hesitatingly.

The guides were now called in, and the number that was deemed sufficient engaged; but there was an unfortunate deficiency of ladies' saddles. Of five that could be mustered among the guides, two were already bespoken for the morrow, and one was pronounced in too bad a condition to be of service. But it was unanimously voted that in mountain expeditions servants (especially ladies' maids) were a bore. The sisters professed their readiness to dispense with such an incumbrance for a few days; and it was settled that all the servants should be sent on to Geneva. Then the ladies rose. The room of the duchess was adjoining that where they had dined. Alice followed her mother into it; and this time the duchess embraced her with all the warmth she could desire. Alice offered to give up the expedition if her mother really desired it, but the duchess now spoke cheerfully of the pleasure her child was going to have, and said she was a foolish mother to entertain such fears. So the daughter passed quickly through the room where the gentlemen still lingered at the table; so quickly that even Lord Wessex could not start to his feet to open the door for her. She then sought her own room, candle in hand.

She passed down a corridor which she thought she perfectly remembered. Her door should be the last but one, the last being Edith's. To the latter she went, and, tapping lightly, opened it, without waiting for a reply. She was surprised to find no one there; but, seeing several articles of female apparel, and a large imperial on the floor, she still supposed herself in Edith's apartment. The number of beds and arrangement of the furniture, inn-like, were exactly the same. Puzzled, but unsuspecting, she set her candlestick on the table, when she perceived that the latter was covered with unfamiliar objects, and which could not belong to Edith. There was no other light in the room, but on a dressing-table were four bougies, half-consumed. She perceived that she had made some unaccountable mistake, and was in the apartment of a stranger. She caught up her candle and turned to escape with so sudden a movement that it went out. She was now in complete darkness, and in her perturbation missed the door. She

groped for it and opened the wrong one. She was frightened, and fairly burst into tears.

The confinement for two or three days to a carriage had produced a great accumulation of nervous excitability in a system exquisitely organized, of which the healthy equilibrium was commonly maintained by habits of constant exercise. The perusal of the most exciting romance she had ever been permitted to read, had also produced its effect; ideas and fears, to which she had hitherto been a stranger had been awakened in her mind; even her mother's quite novel anxieties were not without their influence in predisposing her to the nervous terror which seized her on finding herself, not only in the room of a stranger, but in a different part of the inn to what she had supposed. While she was still in this agitation, a step sounded in the corridor, the latch turned, the door was pushed open, and a light shone into the apartment. Alice drew back, and a lady entered, shading a candle with her hand. She started and made the usual French exclamation of surprise on seeing Lady Alice.

The latter, in some degree relieved that it was one of her own sex by whom she was found in so awkward a position, said something rather unintelligible, half in French, half in Italian, to explain that she had mistaken the room, that her candle had gone out, and that she had not been able to find the door. Her agitation and recent tears were evident. She picked up her candlestick, which she had dropped, and, replacing the candle, begged permission to light it by that which the stranger carried.

"I beg pardon, mademoiselle," replied the latter, drawing back and pushing to the door, while she placed herself directly before it; "I think it somewhat extraordinary to find in my chamber, with her candle put out, a young person with whom I have not the honor to be acquainted."

"I have explained, madame, that I entered your chamber supposing it to be my own—that is—my sister's," faltered Alice.

"You have forgotten which it was, I suppose," said the stranger with a smile. "It appears to me that there is in all that a shade of improbability." With these words she turned and locked the door, taking out the key.

"How, madame," said Alice, summoning all her dignity to her aid, "do you pretend to hinder me from leaving this room?"

"By no means, mademoiselle; but, as I have left some valuable effects here exposed, I crave your indulgence while I ascertain if all is right, and perhaps also ask you a few questions."

So saying, she ran to the closet into which Alice had stumbled in the dark, and of which the door was still ajar. She found nothing there however, but some articles of dress, which having fallen to the floor, indicated a recent disturbance. It did not appear that the lady much apprehended the loss of any thing, for though her jewel-box (with a surprising carelessness) lay open on the table she did not even glance at its contents. She seemed rather disappointed not to find some one else concealed, and returned to Alice, who by the help of her indignation, began to recover her *sang-froid*. The stranger examined Lady Alice with curiosity, and thus gave the latter an opportunity of scrutinizing her

in return. Alice confronted her courageously, and, opening wide her large dark eyes returned the look of curiosity and surprise with interest.

It was a woman of a beauty almost as singular as her own. Her complexion was of a transparently clear and golden olive, relieved so well by the raven blackness of her rich hair, as to produce a splendor of effect with which the fairest skins could scarcely vie. The clear oval of her cheek, her long black eye, and classic profile, riveted the attention of Alice. She was tall; a superb figure; a graceful carriage; and was draped in a magnificent India shawl, which scarcely allowed the skirt of her black silk robe to be visible. The regard which she threw upon Alice, at first dubious and tinged with a sort of scorn that seemed to hold in check a feeling of anger, changed to surprise and admiration as she gazed. She looked at her face, at her flowing golden tresses, at her exquisite but very youthful figure.

"Mademoiselle," she said at last, with a faint smile, "I beg pardon for suspecting the truth of your story. I did not suppose that you had entered here for any felonious purpose but your beauty and agitation might pardonably suggest a different idea, which to see you as I now do is sufficient to dissipate."

Alice bowed. The stranger assisted her to light her candle, saying—

"I am sure you are English, mademoiselle?"

Alice assented.

"I have passed many years in England," said the stranger, speaking for the first time in English, and with a faultless accent, "and I speak your language passably well. But you said you had lost your way. I lost mine the first night I was here. I have been here a week now, and know the house pretty well. Will you permit me to be your guide to your room, for I think I can divine its position."

Alice would have declined this offer, but the stranger, having now unlocked the door insisted.

"I must conduct you," she said, "or you may chance to stumble upon some personage of a sex different from ours, who would give you a reception, I dare say, more hospitable than mine, but not so agreeable to your modesty. It is fortunate, after all, that you hit upon the apartment of a woman, so I hope you will forgive me frankly my little jealousy."

"I was an intruder, madam, and can not pretend to judge what suspicion a similar intrusion might excite under circumstances of which I know nothing."

"To be free from suspicion," said the lady, in a voice of great sweetness, "is the prerogative of such innocence as seems written on your beautiful face."

As they went down the corridor, they encountered a gentleman of benignant and venerable appearance, his step indicative of infirmity, and his hair white as snow. He saluted the ladies with some ceremony. Alice observed a ribbon in his button hole. They arrived at Edith's door, at the extremity of the other corridor, where Alice tapped before entering, lest Colonel D'Eyncourt should be there. This however, was not the case; so she thanked the stranger for conducting her, saying—

"I shall bid my sister good night as I intend ed," and entered Edith's apartment.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

OUR young heroine, after an exhausting day, and her adventure at the inn, passed a disagreeable night. A rapid flow of ideas, and the invincible coldness of the extremities, alike attested that unequal distribution of nervous energy which causes the wakefulness of lovers, of the ambitious, and of poets. As the night wore on, this was exchanged for an imperfect and painful somnolence—slumbers in which she seemed never to lose herself, and dreams of vague, ignoble distress. Awake, she suffered more than in her dream. Her judgment being unhinged by the peculiar excitement of *insomnie*, and by the influence of darkness upon the imagination, she was perplexed with an inexorable idea that she ought either to abandon her brother's fortune, or comply with his wishes in regard to her marriage. Then she thought of the effect her present course might have on Frederick Clifford's felicity; and she made, as she tossed on her bed, many an heroic resolve, which she longed for the morning light that she might execute.

From whatever cause it proceeds, it is certain that "exercises" of this sort (to borrow a term from the nomenclature of modern religionism) very often precede a crisis in life. Lady Alice fell asleep toward break of day, and at six the knock of her little maid roused her rather unseasonably from a dreamless slumber. Nevertheless, she rose; made her wonted toilet; but had hardly felt more than a few minutes the somnolent excitement of Mademoiselle Clairvoix's brushes, before her head dropped on the *soubrette's* bosom. Lady Edith coming in at a quarter past seven, found the latter still patiently supporting her young lady's fair form in her arms.

"So late, did you say, Edith? I must have slept an hour."

"During which time Mademoiselle Clairvoix—but I am sure she is very good."

"What a little fool you are, Clarie! You have not common sense, *ma fille*."

Edith reproved her younger sister for saying things that she could not mean, and, begging her to be quick, left the room. Lady Alice appealed to Clarinelle if she were not always a great deal earlier than her sister. It never happened before, in a single instance, that she kept any body waiting, had it? Clarinelle agreed that no young lady ever rose so early, or dressed so expeditiously, or was so punctual in every thing, as hers.

"Have you no desire to see that wonderful Mont Blanc, and the Sea of Ice?" inquired the young patrician.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have a great desire to see them."

"Well, you shall. Really, I think I can hardly do without you. I don't mean it as a reward for your little kindness just now. That was very good of you, as my sister says. See! I give you this ring that you so much admire, by way of thanks."

Mademoiselle Clairvoix refused the ring—seemed half inclined to be hurt at the offer of a reward. The young lady rallied her on her

pride; suggested that Clarinelle doubted her right to dispose of a trinket so valuable; and begged her, since she refused this, to point out some other way of gratifying her. When Alice was dressed, and about to perform her devotions, she desisted suddenly from this teasing, and said: "Don't you see, Clarie, that I want you to wear the ring for my sake?" The *soubrette* took it with a blush. "You will get ready to go to Chamouni, too, as I told you: and come hither, child," she added, in the sweet familiarity of the French second person singular. "*Voilà un petit baiser par-dessus le marché.*"

The day was superb. The mountains were sharply defined against a sky of the purest ultramarine, relieved by some floating masses of white cloud. The narrow path, winding under one precipice, and overhanging another, allowed of course but one mule to pass at a time. They pursued their way in single file. It is one of the charms of an Alpine journey; you are left principally to your own thoughts, without the oppression of solitude, or the cheerless impossibility of sympathy. Alice, who rode on the edge of a precipice, or slid down a deep declivity, where the least mis-step of her mule would have involved the most imminent peril of life, with as much indifference as she had ever cantered up the avenue of one of her father's parks, was refreshed in mind, as in body, by every step they advanced. She had the satisfaction of thinking that she carried, attached to the croup of her saddle, all the conveniences of which, for this whole excursion, she could avail herself. Her wardrobe, with some slight and indispensable exceptions, she wore upon her person; she was unincumbered, free, and, in a certain sense, alone. Perhaps the removal of all effective control, through the absence of her parents, was also an unconscious stimulus. The savage magnificence that continually opened upon her view, passed into her mind with a peaceful and strengthening power—a series of pictures never to be effaced from the memory of an artist. She could hardly credit that she had suffered so much from an obscure excitement the night previous; she had difficulty in remembering her distress; she felt herself strong to encounter either real enemies or the goblins of her own fancy.

In order to mount Clarinelle, it had been necessary to put in requisition the saddle which had been condemned the night before. By some of the contrivances known to muleteers, it was got in order, and strapped, as it seemed, securely enough, on one of the strongest mules. Alice had inquired which was the condemned saddle, and ordered her own carpet-bag and dressing-case to be attached to it. As her maid was to ride the animal, this was thought quite natural; but as soon as this was done, she sprang easily into the seat, and to the remonstrances of Colonel D'Eyncourt and her sister, only answered with a laugh: "Clarinelle is going to Chamouni because such is my will and pleasure. Therefore I shall not allow her to ride this saddle, for if she were to break her neck in consequence, my conscience would never be easy afterward."

All went very well till they were descending

the last slope before reaching the half-way *châlet*, where it is usual to take some refreshment and repose. Here Lady Alice's mule, which had passed twenty points of ten times the difficulty without a single slip, suddenly stumbled and came upon his knees. Alice grasped the horn (while Clarinelle, who was immediately behind, shrieked) and so great was the force she could deploy, on occasion, with those limbs whose rounded symmetry every motion betrayed, that she would have saved herself from a fall, had not the outer girth given way under the violent strain; the upper part of the saddle came away altogether, and she was precipitated with it over the animal's head. She fell first upon some smooth turf that edged the path; slid on, head foremost, for a couple of yards, and struck against a projecting piece of rock that partly arrested her course and partly changed it, so as to have carried her over inevitably in another instant, but for the presence of mind, or rather instinctive effort, of Lady Edith's guide, who caught her by the dress just as her body was losing its equilibrium on the edge of the precipice. The part of the saddle which had come away, rolled over, and fell four hundred feet into the chasm.

It was the affair of an instant. Lady Edith, startled by Clarinelle's piercing cry, just turned her head in time to see her sister's form balancing on the sloping roadside, and seized at that critical moment by her own guide, who, after the ludicrous practice of the mountaineers in descending a declivity, was walking behind her mule and holding it back by the tail. But for this custom, at which Lady Alice had laughed heartily when she first observed it, there would have been no one near enough to render that trifling assistance on which her life depended.

Clarinelle, who would ordinarily have been unable to dismount without assistance, jumped off her mule in the twinkling of an eye, and lifted her young lady to the other side of the path. In a trice all were gathered to the spot. Lady Alice was pale, and her eyes were closed, but she did not seem senseless, though stunned. Colonel D'Eyncourt felt her pulse. Lady Edith, very pale, untied her sister's bonnet and unbuttoned her habit, saying to Lord Wessex—

"Please withdraw a little, and these men—" pointing to the staring guides.

Clarinelle, in tears, supported the head of her mistress in her lap.

"Do you think she ought to be bled, uncle Herbert?" continued Lady Edith.

"Certainly not. Let her be quiet, and keep away the salts. That does more harm than good."

"She must have struck her head, I think," said Colonel D'Eyncourt; "but the pulse is returning. Her position seems an easy one. She is out of the sun here. I think we had better let her remain as she is till she comes round."

"Send to the *châlet* for a litter or something of that sort," said Lady Edith. "By the time it arrives it will answer to move her. Oh, what will mamma say!"

While affairs were in this state, Alice apparently asleep and breathing with the regularity of an infant, a party which had left Martigny an hour later, overtook them. It consisted of a lady, her maid, and two servants, all mounted

on mules, with two guides. The lady stopped, and seeing at a glance what had happened, made inquiries in French, and in a tone of sympathy. Clarinelle started at the sound of the stranger's voice, and looked quickly round. The stranger was listening to Colonel D'Eyncourt's brief but courteous explanation, and Clarinelle, after one earnest look, turned away her head unobserved, and drew down her veil.

Edith disposed a shawl to hide the slight derangement of her sister's dress, but the stranger, as she advanced a little further, caught a sight of the face of Alice, started, and changed color. In a voice of some emotion she now begged to know if she could render any assistance, and, addressing Lady Edith in English, offered her own saddle to replace that which had caused the accident, in case the young lady recovered sufficiently to sit her mule. Lady Alice slightly shuddered. After some phrases of course, the party passed on, to Edith's great relief, and apparently to that of Clarinelle, who drew a deep sigh.

At length the litter arrived. The sufferer was placed upon it, and in twenty minutes they reached the *châlet*.

CHAPTER II.

"DAY is beginning to break, my lady, and the sky is perfectly clear," said Clarinelle Clairvoix, standing at the bedside of Lady Alice the second morning after the accident on the "Tête Noire."

The chamber was faintly illumined by the reflected light of a waning moon. The young girl stirred; opened her eyes; closed them again, and composed herself to sleep.

Clarinelle repeated: "Day is beginning to break, my lady, and the sky is perfectly clear. If your ladyship do not rise immediately, you will not see Mont Blanc touched with the first rays of the sun."

Lady Alice turned her head on the pillow somewhat languidly. "What is it, Clarinelle?"

The *soubrette* repeated; and her young mistress at length slowly rose and suffered herself to be dressed by her faithful attendant.

"My hat and shawl, Clarie."

"You do not mean to go out alone, so soon after your accident? If you should chance to be faint, mademoiselle!"

"Oh, I am quite well this morning, child; and the fresh morning air will do me good."

"In three minutes—in two—I can attend you, mademoiselle," said the *soubrette*, who had shared her mistress's apartment, and was but half-dressed. The girl spoke with anxiety.

"I prefer to go alone. Go you to bed again," said Lady Alice, in her usual *insouciant* manner, and already descending the stair.

The girl, however, half-dressed as she was, ran down after her, and opened for her mistress the door that led into the court, pointing out the way she must take. Alice smiled, waved her hand affectionately, and moved on in the direction indicated.

Threading a narrow lane, she reached a road that stretched through the open fields, with Mont Blanc in full view. The stars were disappear-

ing, the moon growing paler; one keen planet glittered in the deep blue against which the white summit and the surrounding Aiguilles showed their outline, rounded and smooth as snow-drifts. Soon the dusk-white and heaven-touching scalp of the mountain began to be tinged with a delicate color; it became rosy, while the planet grew more silvery, and the moon became white. In a very few minutes the sun was risen upon the head of Mont Blanc, and the dark edge of shadow thrown across its snowy surface, as if by the circumference of the earth itself, began to descend the side of the mountain. There was a cheerful sound of bells; it was Sunday morning, and in all directions the peasantry were flocking to the Church of Chamouni, to chant the rosary, and hear the early mass.

Alice followed a party of young girls, and entered the church with them. It was filled with a worshipping crowd; the men and women sat on opposite sides. She found a place among the latter, and with a full heart, while the responses of the rosary broke forth from hundreds of voices, she, too, knelt, and offered thanksgivings for the new mercy that had again preserved a life which youth, health, and affection made so sweet; which beauty, genius, birth, and fortune promised to render so brilliant.

As she was retiring from the church, she observed before her an individual of her own sex, who, on reaching the door, stopped, with the evident intention of addressing her. Before she could distinguish her features, turned as her face was toward the dim interior of the church, she recognized, by the figure and the rich shawl that enveloped it, the lady into whose room she had blundered at Martigny.

"I am charmed to see you sufficiently recovered from that terrible fall, to be out at so early an hour, yet I fear it is an imprudence that you commit," said the stranger, in her sweet voice.

Alice recoiled, with an unaccountable feeling of distance, almost of repugnance, which perhaps showed itself too unequivocally on her countenance, full in the streaming light that diffused itself from the glittering side of Mont Blanc. If the stranger observed it, her own face was too much in shadow to betray the impression it caused.

Alice could not avoid replying. She was sensible, she said, of no other ill consequence from her accident than a slight stiffness.

"You are not sufficiently protected against the sharp morning air in that shawl," said the lady, throwing off her own; "let me exchange with you. I insist upon it, unless you wish me to think that you regard me with hostility, or at least with repugnance. And yet I feel very kindly toward you, Lady Alice."

Alice felt that it would be exceedingly ungracious to resist this, which was said with an emotion that could scarcely be feigned; but she resolved not to be compelled into an intimacy with a person she did not know, and who inspired her with an irresistible aversion, in spite, or perhaps because of her exceedingly insinuating manner.

"It would be unfair to me, and unjust to yourself," she said, "when there are so many other good reasons why I should decline your

very kind offer, to attribute my doing so to such a cause; but I understand very well that you do not really think it. It is a kind artifice to compel me; but I am not the dupe of it," she added, smiling, and drawing her own tartan more closely round her. "I could not venture to expose myself in making the exchange, which, besides, is quite unnecessary."

"Ah! you, too, are self-willed, I see."

They were now in a path leading across the open fields; the stranger resumed her shawl, and Alice could not help wondering whether, were they in the Castle of Truth, her companion would not confess, as the motive of unshawling, a wish to display the singular elegance of her shape and costume.

"Well," said the latter, after she had draped herself again in the most graceful manner possible, in a cachemere which it was almost a sin to wear, so costly was it, "I can not blame you for risking something to see that magnificent mountain by this unrivaled morning. From what I hear, one may wait months at Chamouni, and not behold Mont Blanc piercing with his snowy cone a firmament of such unclouded blue."

Alice looked keenly at her companion, who interested her in spite of her first unfavorable prepossessions.

"It must have been on such a morning that Coleridge beheld it," continued the stranger, "Did you observe that beautiful planet at day-break?"

"Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star
In his steep course?"

said Alice, carelessly, by way of answer.

"So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O Sovran Blanc!"

pursued the stranger, with animation; and she went on to repeat the whole fragment in a half-recitation, and with a really exquisite elocution.

It was an art in which Alice herself excelled, and she enjoyed its display. She was a little surprised too, at this seeming familiarity with English literature in a foreigner. In an English boarding-school Miss it would have been quite natural; but in a Frenchwoman implied no ordinary cultivation. The accent too, was as nearly perfect as possible; purely that of a native Englishwoman, so far as the accurate ear of Alice could discover.

"I can scarcely believe you to be French," said the latter, after praising the recitation.

"I am so, nevertheless, by birth and allegiance," said the stranger; "but I have English blood in my veins, and passed my girlhood in England; so that I do not know at this moment which language I speak with the greater facility. That should not surprise you, who speak French like a Parisian."

"Yet you knew me at once to be English," said Alice, incredulously.

"It was the style of your beauty, and also a nameless something in your manners that I recognized. Something perhaps in the turn of your thoughts, though it was little you said; and above all your characteristic pride and coldness. Do not be offended. They are qualities I admire, Lady Alice."

"And to whom have I the pleasure of speaking?" said Alice.

"I was born De Belmont," replied the com-

panion, "but at present I am called von Schönberg. You see I have rather translated my name than changed it. Madame, or, if you prefer the German, Die hochgeborene Gräfinn, Frau von Schönberg, and your very devoted servant."

"You are become Saxon then, countess?" said Lady Alice.

"Count Schönberg in Saxon," said Madame de Schönberg, with emphasis. "I remain always French. I beg you, however, not to repeat that, for, as the count represents his sovereign at the court of Vienna, the report of such a sentiment from Madame l'Ambassadrice might hurt his interests."

An acquaintance so singularly made, with such a personage, whose personal qualities were as brilliant as her position, could not but affect the imagination of the impressible young Englishwoman. Alice had an instantaneous presentiment that it was the commencement of an intercourse destined to influence, in some way, her character or destiny, but whether for good or evil, she was by no means sure. Madame de Schönberg, in announcing, with a very careless smile, her name and rank, had not failed to observe attentively the effect produced upon her young companion, but after the first earnest regard the sweet gravity of Alice's face offered no indication.

"Let us take another view of Mont Blanc before we plunge into this village," said the countess.

She turned, as did Alice, and the latter now perceived that Clarinelle was following them at some distance. The girl drew back, as if she feared the displeasure of her young mistress for having followed when she was not desired; but Alice beckoned to her. As she approached, Madame de Schönberg, turning to address Lady Alice, also perceived the *soubrette*, and changed color. Clarinelle regarded her slightly and without any sign of recognition. Alice, still looking at the snowy summit, did not observe the sudden emotion of her new acquaintance.

"Clarinelle, my good girl, please tighten the lace of my boot," said Lady Alice.

Clarinelle stooped down and did as she was desired.

"Is this your excellency's first visit to Chamouni?" asked Alice.

Clarinelle looked up quickly.

"My first visit," replied the embassadress.

Clarinelle secured the end of the lacing.

"Ah, that is better," said her mistress.

"*Merci, mon enfant,*" and Lady Alice turned carelessly homeward. "You return to the hotel, countess?"

Madame de Schönberg bowed.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN ALICE was borne insensible to the *chalet* after her accident, she remained for nearly two hours in the same state of stupor. The continuance of this condition was beginning to excite the most lively uneasiness in the minds of her friends, when all at once it passed away, and she awoke as from a sound sleep, a little bewildered, and complaining of head-ache, and

of feeling bruised, but appearing to have sustained no serious injury, and very desirous of proceeding immediately to Chamouni.

A litter was proposed, but she would not hear of it; and, in fine, rode very well the rest of the distance. Madame de Schönberg had been profuse in offers of assistance and expressions of sympathy, and had insisted on leaving her saddle, which Clarinelle used. Having preceded them by two hours, and Colonel D'Eyncourt having compelled the guides to move very slowly, the countess arrived at Chamouni in time to send back charrs to meet them at Argentièrre; nor could any thing have been more opportune, for the head-ache of Alice had by that time become so violent that a further ride would have been intolerable, not to say unsafe.

These attentions paved the way to acquaintance. Madame de Schönberg found that she was occupying the only private parlor in the mountain inn. She begged to surrender it to Lady Edith D'Eyncourt and her friends. It was finally agreed to share it. Madame de Schönberg's name and high position could not be concealed, of course; indeed, it appeared that the Marquis of Wessex had met her in England several years back, although their acquaintance had been slight. His lordship seemed at first to have entirely forgotten her, but the countess recalling the time, the place, and the circumstances, with some minuteness, he at length recollected perfectly, that he had passed more than a fortnight in the same country-house where Mademoiselle de Belmont had also been a guest.

Alice, naturally, had retired immediately upon their arrival, and, after tea and a warm bath, fell asleep. Clarinelle would not quit her lady, and Lady Edith finding herself not needed in her sister's room, passed the whole evening in Madame de Schönberg's parlor.

The countess talked; not scandal, but a mixture of graceful sentiment and piquant anecdote. She had the air of being very little occupied with the gentlemen, upon whom her beauty, manners and evident talent produced naturally the greatest effect, but she seemed interested in Lady Edith, and managed to convey this impression without having recourse to flattery. When conversation a little flagged, she herself proposed music, without waiting to be asked; and sang at once in a magnificent style, with a voice of thrilling power. All implored her to favor them again. French, Italian, English, and German songs succeeded one another. Even Herbert Courtenay was charmed, especially when the countess, who seemed to divine every one's character, executed with effect a grand *morceau* of Palestrina's. Lady Edith would not refuse to sing in her turn; the countess was delighted with her delicious, though not powerful soprano, and proposed a duet. She never traveled without music. Several duets to suit their voices were produced; Edith could not deny that she knew the music; the piano, unlike inn pianos, was in tune. The fact was, that Madame de Schönberg, who never missed a point, had a skillful *accordeur* for one of her male attendants, and he had been engaged for two hours after her arrival in putting the instrument in order.

The acquaintance matured rapidly. Plans for the morrow were spoken of, and arrangements were made, by Madame de Schönberg,

and the gentlemen, to visit the Flegère. Lady Edith would not leave her sister, and it could not be expected that Alice would so soon be able to make an excursion. That young lady, who was awake long before day, and disappointed at not seeing the rising sun gild the head of Mont Blanc, absolutely invisible from fog till ten o'clock, would have gladly gone to Flegère; but this was overruled.

She remained, therefore, at home, and Edith read to her all the morning; but hearing that they were indebted for their sitting-room to a new acquaintance, a German countess and embassadress, and a very charming and accomplished person too, Alice retreated to her own room as soon as the party arrived from the Flegère, and sat up till midnight, partly engaged in finishing "*La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*," the sequel of "*Consuelo*," and partly in an employment that needs, we hope, only to be suggested, and which our pious young heroine never forgot.

It thus happened that she had not encountered Madame de Schönberg, till they met on Sunday morning in the Chamouni church; and Alice was not aware, till the countess mentioned her husband's diplomatic rank, that the jealous lady of Martigny and the distinguished personage who had so much charmed her friends, were the same.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY hangs heavily on most English travelers who chance to spend it at an inn on the continent, in a place where there is no Church of England service. Especially is this true of those whom the national respect for the first day of the week arrests in Switzerland on a tour of the passes. Wherever carriages or heavy luggage can go, the experienced English traveler is careful to be supplied with books for Sunday reading, religious or otherwise, according to his taste or principles, as a resource against the horrors of his forced inactivity. But on the mule routes this precaution can not so conveniently be taken, and in the natural desire to rid oneself of every superfluous incumbrance, is often quite forgotten; so that the unfortunate Protestant, condemned by principle or prejudice, or the fear of outraging the public opinion of his nearly omnipresent countrymen, to eschew excursions and every thing that can be called amusement, is in the desperate case of finding himself without any of the devout or permitted *passe-temps* with which he is wont to while away the monotony of the sacred hours.

Such was not the case of the party at Chamouni, with, possibly, the exception of the Marquis of Wessex. A half hour had scarcely elapsed after the return of Alice to their hotel, before Colonel D'Eyncourt and the two sisters were kneeling in Lady Edith's room, before a temporary altar, prepared, according to the custom of this family, with lights, and crucifix, and chalice, and all other decencies of worship, where the Rev. Mr. Courtenay celebrated the morning service of their Church, with as scrupulous an obedience to the rubric, and as much reverence and devotion, as if he had been officiating in the Chapel Royal or a cathedral choir.

The entrance of Clarinelle, a very fervent

Catholic, and imbued with an extreme horror of heresy, was a domestic event of some interest. It might have been partly due to the fact that there were no other servants to be present, and that she yielded more readily to her curiosity, or whatever was her motive, in the presence solely of her kind superiors. The apartment was scantily furnished with chairs, and the noble sisters made room for Clarinelle on their sofa.

The *Te Deum*, *Benedictus*, Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Litany, all chanted in Latin, were the more edifying on that account to a French Catholic, who knew all but the last by heart, and was well accustomed to sing *Libera nos, Domine*, and *Te rogamus audi nos*. The remainder of the service—the English mass—could not have been so well understood; but Mr. Courtenay's care to read the Epistle and Gospel, each at its proper horn of the altar, the position assumed by all during the latter, and the familiar words of the *Credo* that followed, would enable her to recognize some features of a mutilated rite.

After the service, when the sacred vessels and their adjuncts had been removed, breakfast was served to the party in the same room. As Lady Edith handed her uncle a cup of tea, she observed to him that Alice had finished "*La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*," and was delighted with it.

"With the story! But the doctrine? I should not have expected you to sympathize much with Illuminism, Ally."

"I find it 'distressing,' as good Mr. — says. It confuses all my notions."

"A curious doctrine and very ancient; indestructible too, for it represents the mind of the flesh. In '*Consuelo*,' I must say, this is fairly allowed. The reinstatement of the flesh in its rights, of which a superstitious fanaticism has deprived it, is an avowed feature."

"Nay," said Alice, "Satan himself is represented as he who has been wronged: *Que celui à qui on a fait tort le salue*."

"With strict logical consistency; for, if you deny that God Incarnate suffered on the Cross, the world, the flesh, and the devil have alike been egregiously wronged," said Mr. Courtenay.

"These Illuminists seem to be Manicheans, then," said D'Eyncourt.

"So was Cain," said Mr. Courtenay. "He would offer a thank-offering. Abel brought an expiation. See the two religions (for there were never really more) opposed as soon as there were two men to profess them. The earliest records of the East, and symbolical remains older than records, inform us of the sanguinary strife that raged between their partisans; the one party observing the bloody rites of animal sacrifice, the other abjuring them as profane. In time the former prevailed, and the blood of victims flowed on every altar in the world; but in modern times the old doctrine of Cain has revived, and his oblation is restored in the flower-worship of Buddha."

"Our sacrifice is bloodless, yet represents an expiation?" said Alice, modestly.

"You have said it precisely, my dear child. Every Christian liturgy contains in its canon two distinct oblations. One, as I have often told you, is of the bread and wine in their natural substance, as fruits of the earth, to God our Maker

and Preserver: 'of His own we give Him.' Thus, we may conceive, Adam offered, or would have offered, before his fall. This oblation the offended Creator rejected from the son of the fallen. It is significant, that it is the sole material sacrifice of the new law. But we have another, which is mystical; when the same elements are sanctified as the body and blood of Christ—the Lamb slain in all sacrifices from the foundation of the world. This is the great, the 'tremendous' oblation in the holy Eucharist, of which the Fathers speak. Around this has formed itself, like planets from the flaming body of their sun, the ritual system of the Church Catholic. In this, the covenant once made between earth and Heaven, in the blood of an infinite expiation, is daily renewed. The action at which we have just assisted, therefore, is the greatest that is accomplished, even in that spiritual realm of which we are denizens. When the Holy Visitant descends upon our altars, and the holy gifts, which He has blessed, are borne by adoring angels into the presence of the Celestial Majesty, well may we believe, that somewhere the bonds of the afflicted are loosed, the strength of fainting virtue is revived, or (for this glorious communication between heaven and earth flies on the equal wings of mercy and judgment) the wicked are suffered to fill up the measure of their crimes, and seal themselves for perdition."

Mr. Courtenay's love of monologue had grown upon him since he had found in his niece a never-weary auditor. There was a silence that lasted for some time after he had ceased. Lady Edith broke it, by referring to the romance which Alice had been reading. Mr. Courtenay, though for particular reasons, springing from his niece's character, passionate tastes, natural gifts, and peculiar education, he had advised its being put into her hands, was nevertheless of opinion that it was only, perhaps, the best book of a most pernicious class. The sensual taint, he observed, from which none of them were free, and which it was necessary, not for a young girl merely, but for every one without exception, to avoid like the plague, was capable, in this work, of removal "by the knife;" and he thought it would be useful to Alice to see the doctrine of these writers presented in so distinct a shape, and with all the charm that genius could give its naked falsehood, in order that she might be better able to detect it in its subtler forms. Lastly, he enlarged upon the doctrine itself, the formidable diffusion of it in Europe by fictions universally perused, its moral and political character.

"Know this cankerous error," he said, "in its principle, and in the opinion that ever accompanies it: namely, that the evils of society, and the sufferings of men are removable by some change in social or political laws. Their doctrine as to marriage, through which the equivocal author of 'Consuelo' has gained an unenviable notoriety, is a type of their remedies for social ills. They do not see that the unbending nature of a moral institution is the necessary condition of virtue. As little do they comprehend that the staking of a life's happiness on the heart's choice is what alone gives seriousness and dignity to the sweet illusion of youth. A pusillanimous and sensual philosophy

is unable to receive it, that a single action prompted by passion is always irrevocable, and may be a sacrament of destiny. Really," concluded Herbert, "I so far agree with the Jesuits, whose principles in general I so much dislike—that an immoral Catholic is better than an irreproachable Illuminist, for the one but cuts down and defaces the stalk and flower of virtue, but the other plucks up the plant by the roots."

CHAPTER V.

THE young attendant of Lady Alice, so often mentioned, was a clear brunette, with a slight figure, perfectly formed. The brilliant gloss of her well-arranged black hair gave an instant impression of personal neatness, which a more attentive observation confirmed. Her well-fitted habit of dark-blue merino, with a small collar of worked muslin, her straw bonnet, and its well-chosen ribbon, the black silk scarf, and the faultless *chaussure*, were a costume very modest, yet refined. In fact, Clarie might be deemed a very pretty girl. She had fine eyes, undeniably; her nose might be best described as the reverse of aquiline, but it was charming; her forehead and her mouth were sweet.

Clarinelle had been more than a year in the service of Lady Alice. The duchess wanted a personal attendant for her daughter, who, at the same time, would be a safe companion. Her skill was of less consequence than the simplicity of her heart. The more nearly she was of Alice's age, and the prettier, the better.

"I have your affair," said the Duchesse de R—, to whom she applied. "'Tis a good little girl, very honest, very skillful, good Catholic. It is only sixteen years of age, and very pretty to boot. Precisely at this juncture, her mother, who was my confidential *femme-de-chambre*, is deceased, and this young orphan has not a relative that I know of in the world. She does not suit me, for precisely the reasons that recommend her to your grace; she is too young and too pretty."

"She was born in wedlock?"

"Of course," said Madame de R—.

Alice was enchanted with her new acquisition. Clarie looked very interesting in her deep mourning. The family of Alice were also in mourning; a circumstance that made Clarinelle feel less an orphan when introduced among these strangers and foreigners, whose manners, in spite of what she had heard of English pride and *hauteur* toward inferiors, were so gracious and so sympathetic. The ravishing beauty of her young mistress, and her extreme kindness, won the heart of the *soubrette* the very first night of her service at Lady Alice's toilet. There is no passion of later years more absorbing or devoted than this enthusiastic sentiment of a very young girl for some almost worshiped being of her own sex: from that time, the duties of Clarinelle were so many offices of humble love. The penetrating young patrician soon discovered what Clarinelle's pride concealed, and though careful not to acknowledge any thing of the sort, she participated in a romantic affection, which her imagination invested with

the colors of poetry. Her demeanor toward Clarinelle was now familiar and engaging, now calm and reserved; at one while playing the capricious and difficult mistress; at another, the tender companion, the affable princess, who, in her retirement, treats a favorite attendant as an equal and a friend. It was in this instance, indeed, that Alice first displayed that mixture of vivacity and self-command for which she was remarkable. Her mother and Edith were often surprised at the despotism with which she often required Clarinelle, in their presence, to wait upon her fancies. Lady Edith took her seriously to task. Alice, with mock contrition confessed that she was a spoiled child, and the next time her sister dropped into her dressing-room, she would find Alice entertaining Clarinelle with some amusing or pathetic story of her own invention, while she taught her at the same time some new and fanciful embroidery. Indeed, in cultivating the talents of Clarinelle, which were considerable, Alice was unwearied, and endeavored to impart to her her own knowledge and accomplishments, to a degree which even the duchess feared was injudicious. Nevertheless, this sage of mothers would not check her, reserving it to herself to place the young orphan in a higher position, if her daughter succeeded in making her quite unfit for that which she at present occupied. But we are forgetting, for a simple maid, another personage of some importance in the world and in this history.

Lord Wessex was not an early riser. He had intended to see the sun rise that very morning. He had seen it twice in the vale of Chamouni; but Lady Alice had, he knew a sovereign contempt for indolent habits in young men, and could forgive any thing short of sin, sooner than indifference to the beauty and grandeur of nature; unless it was indifference to the beauty and grandeur of divine worship. Therefore, also, he had resolved to be present at the early service, of which he had been informed the eve. But it was the burst of the *Venite* from the contiguous apartment of Lady Edith, that roused him from a state between slumber and reverie. The marquis was a lover of music, and no mean connoisseur. He started up. It was a harmony of four voices; Mr. Courtenay's fine tenor, D'Eyncourt's bass, Lady Edith's sweet soprano, and what might be the contralto, rich and thrilling, of the younger sister. There was no instrument, yet the precision and fullness might almost have deceived the ear into the belief of an accompaniment.

It ceased, and immediately the two male voices began to chant in unison, to a delicious cadence, and very rapidly:

"Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks: yea, unto Thee do we give thanks."

The voices of the sisters, also in unison replied:

"Thy name also is so nigh; and that do thy wondrous works declare."

At the end of the psalm, all four voices swelled the volume of the *Gloria*, and then began a new psalm to a new cadence:

"In Jewry is God known: his name is great in Israel. At Salem is his tabernacle: and his dwelling in Sion."

Another full-voiced *Gloria*; another chanted psalm; followed by grave monotone of solemn lessons and the interposed sweetness of melodious canticles—the Hymn of Ambrose and the

Song of Zachary; trumpet-soundings of the Church Militant, animating her fainting columns to renew once more, and yet once more, the spiritual fight. John Henry, Marquis of Wessex, had scarcely so sublime an apprehension of what he listened to, but he appreciated its musical perfection. It was with a deep gratification, which he meant to express to Lady Alice, that he heard the subduing minor tones of the suffrages, the liquid flow of intoning in the collects, and the harmonious close of the *Amens*. But the anthem which then followed, sustained by a slight accompaniment, but he knew not of what instrument, with a solo, sung by Alice—the words English, and the music Handel's, transported him out of himself.

This solo, indeed, revealed at a flash all the superiority of these powers which might, perhaps, have been guessed by the sweetness of her unisons. But now she trebled the volume of sound to pour forth a note so rich and clear; and if you had doubted before that those low, veiled notes were not the natural region of that thrilling voice, it was clearly proven now, while the rapid flood of vocalization, rising by semitones, passed without effort the fancied limit you had imposed upon it, till a pure, prolonged, and liquid warble, that might have issued from the throat of a nightingale in the moon-lit bowers of the singer's native isle, fluttering over a region of the scale that Edith could scarcely have reached—joyous, gushing and triumphant notes that went right to your heart, yet attenuating at last to something softer than silence—terminated the wonderful gamut in demonstrating an organ of unrivaled compass, sweetness, flexibility, and power.

Other listeners, by this time, were gathered in the corridor. Some disturbed sleepers were at first impatient, then opened their doors to hear better. Madame de Schönberg, whose room was opposite Lady Edith's, stood at her own door. When the anthem was finished, and the cadences of the Litany succeeded, she closed the door, threw herself upon her knees, and, still listening to the more faintly heard but familiar suffrages, wept as she listened;—wept till her tears became sobs, and her sobs convulsions. It was sad and wonderful—that superb and lovely woman, alone, wrestling with a deep distress, prostrate. It was like a noble ship that gallantly left port; but far out at sea, while the round of the horizon incloses no other object, tempest-tossed, torn, and her spars dipping in the huge, wind-swollen waves. They smite her with a force that makes all her timbers tremble, and the terrified landsman believes that every shock will be the last.

Thus the Countess Schönberg listened to the Litany, of which she could by no means distinguish the words; but as the mystic oblation that followed proceeded with a graver and fainter sound, and only occasional bursts or harmony, though she could still less distinguish those words which were taught only by angels, her passion subsided, and thoughts of unwonted peace, resolves of a holier courage than she had hitherto felt, refreshed and sustained her soul. Such was the mood in which she sought, presently after, the little parlor which she had put at the disposition of Lady Edith D'Eyncourt and her friends. She hoped that the sisters (their

service done) would soon appear there, in which she was disappointed, for they breakfasted, as we have seen, in Lady Edith's own room, and loitered long over the meal, listening to their uncle Herbert's talk; but she did encounter there another individual, drawn thither by a hope similar to her own. This was the Marquis of Wessex. He was in a very different frame from the countess. As the sisters did not appear, the *tête-à-tête* of the English peer and the minister's wife was prolonged to nearly two hours. During the excursion to the Flegère the day before, they had renewed their acquaintance of so long ago. The memory of the marquis indeed wonderfully revived in the course of this ride. An uninterrupted interview of two hours, however, afforded a much better opportunity for indulging in these mutual reminiscences. It was terminated at last by the countess going to the piano, when her playing very soon brought in Colonel D'Eyncourt, and, presently after, the sisters. Madame de Schönberg ceased playing at the entrance of the latter, and said, anticipating Lady Edith—

"Since you are come, Lady Alice, I have not the assurance to continue."

Alice had not seen Lord Wessex since her accident. To him it was her first appearance for two days. She saluted him with a sweet smile, and held out her hand. As he advanced to take it, he caught a warning glance and slight quick gesture of the countess. He stopped, rather awkwardly, and said that he hoped she was quite recovered from the effects of her fall.

"Quite, I thank you," said Lady Alice, coldly, and, turning to Madame de Schönberg—"Please, countess, go on with your music."

"Alice gets acquainted with people (like some enchanted lady) in a state of trance," said Edith. "I was going to introduce you. Pray when and where did you and Madame de Schönberg ever meet?"

"Our first rencounter was certainly curious," said the countess, with a smile.

CHAPTER VI.

THE causes that influence events are other than to the world it seems. In India it was believed that by penance and sacrifice a man might win any boons, even from a reluctant heaven. Like power over the realms of nature, and the agents of the Prince of the Air, has been assigned in Europe to the mystic combination of words and the efficacy of spells. But the mysterious intercourse which prayer, and, above all, sacrifice—the most consummate form of prayer, really establish between the visible and invisible worlds; the spell-like and binding nature of certain actions, one of the least of which may arm the spirits of darkness to accomplish our ruin, or summon the beneficent ministry of angels to our aid; this, the working of a law of which none but the good can avail themselves, and that unconsciously for the most part, and from which the evil can not be delivered, against which they vainly struggle:—this is something at the same time supernatural and real, and, truly comprehended, renders existence fearful indeed.

The Marquis of Wessex was now at one of

those conjunctures of our mortal life, when un seen beings, it is probable, are deciding upon our permanent destiny. To speak of that which appeared to affect most nearly his future, and on which his happiness—his life—his salvation—might perchance depend—namely, his prospects of winning the hand of Alice Stuart—his position at this time was not a bad one, as may presently appear.

It was quite true that the designation of the marquis as her husband, by the wish of her brother, to whom she was so much indebted, had not availed to secure the acquiescence of the young heiress, in a matter that concerned herself supremely. Yet no doubt it was so far influential that it led her to balance seriously the claims of one, of whom otherwise, it is probable, she would never have thought at all. It always gave him an advantage; and, could Alice be brought once more to consider a suit she had rejected, might decide her choice. It was quite true, also, that she was attached, or at least entertained a girlish fancy for another. But this was an alliance at which Alice felt scruples, more serious than the marquis would have credited, and which, in the case of a young lady of so much importance, would be opposed by many obstacles. It is a ruled case that women are very like to marry men whom they have refused, and that few ever marry their first love. Alice, indeed, had resolved on being one of the exceptions, if ever she married at all—a common resolution at seventeen—but the resolutions formed at that charming epoch of female existence are not apt to resemble the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not. Lord Wessex could always count on Edith's influence in his favor, and this, in the long run, was sure to tell. Their intellectual rating was so very different that Alice was always treating Edith sportively, but she really loved her dearly, and deferred very much to her opinion, or rather to her feeling, on points of conscience. She would pout or laugh at her elder sister's grave counsels, but she generally did as she was advised. In short, she was tractable, though spirited; and though she never would yield when she believed herself in the right, and in such cases amused herself with pretending to be self-willed, she never had the wrong-headedness, or wrong-heartedness, to persevere merely because she "had said she would." On the contrary, from the subtle organization of her mind, and profound education, Alice had often the appearance of inconstancy. She saw how much could be said on both sides. She perceived the reasonableness of what Edith urged, that perfect bliss was not to be expected in this world. She must make up her mind to a lot, in some respects incomplete. Admitting that Clifford was the faultless hero that Alice supposed, still the loveliness of the latter might serve a higher end, in securing the feebler virtue of a young nobleman like Lord Wessex, whose position exposed him to a thousand temptations, but who, influenced by a wife that he loved and revered, might be every thing that was good, and so greatly useful, than in merely rewarding an excellence, which, if it were what she deemed, must be sustained by higher motives. This was the way to talk to Alice. But when Edith went on to illustrate her position by a reference to her own history,

and mentioned that George, whom Alice so loved and respected, so kind a husband and brother, so esteemed and looked up to for his high character and talents, had been sadly wild, as a very young man, and how he had been reformed by his love for herself, and so on, the beautiful lip of the younger sister curled. It was very well for Edith, who was so good herself, to have achieved a transformation of that sort, but she (Alice) did not pretend to be a saint. She really had no mind to be married at all, as Edith was well aware; but if she ever did wed, it would certainly not be, knowingly, any young man who had been a little wicked. It was not necessary to be wicked, she was sure. There was Courtenay; could there be a manlier fellow? he had been at Eton, and at the University, and he was very popular at both; yet how more than correct, how pure-minded, how conscientious he was! She knew him as well as she knew Edith, and talked to him almost as frankly, and she believed he detested as much the very idea of doing wrong as she herself. And Alice, even talking to her sister, crimsoned with the emotion of indignant modesty.

At the same time, Alice by no means associated with this her objections to Lord Wessex. She had an idea that the latter had formed, in early youth, an attachment, or a sudden fancy that he never got over, for Edith herself; and that his long friendship for Ludovic Stratherne, and, finally, his present fancy for her, were results of that first impression.

Indeed, the marquis had persuaded Lady Edith that such was the case, and Edith had communicated her conviction to her sister. Alice thought that such fidelity to a youthful sentiment was an extremely respectable trait, to say the least, and though the marquis did not interest her imagination, he did interest a good deal the least selfish and most generous impulses of her heart. His incomprehensible rudeness in not taking her offered hand in Madame de Schönberg's parlor, offended her for the moment; but, directly after, she concluded that it must have been in the pride of an unrequited attachment, that he had declined this mark of a friendship that perhaps insulted one who coveted love. Alice sympathized with spirit. Lord Wessex seemed less weak in showing, as she supposed, a resentment of this sort. And a girl brought up as she had been, necessarily felt to the utmost the attaching influence of familiarity. In the intimacy of a week's travel in their company, he had become associated with persons and objects the most dear to her. She was very gracious to him all the rest of the day, and after Even Song in Edith's room—his being admitted to which made him appear really one of the family, her manner was tinged with absolute tenderness. She even confessed, as she bade him good night, and took her way alone to her chamber, that it would pain her to lose wholly the power she possessed over him, or to regard him as a being who ought to be indifferent to herself.

CHAPTER VII.

THE room was the best of the mountain inn. A carpet of gay colors covered the floor; cur-

tains of embroidered muslin shrouded the French bed. In other arrangements of the apartment, the refined notions of its temporary inmate were rather to be observed. The round center table was covered with a large crimson square shawl, of French cachemire, with a rich border, and on it Madame de Schönberg's dressing-case lay open. Its contents, scattered about, made a glittering confusion; part were symmetrically disposed on the dressing-table. The articles of attire which usually litter more or less the room of a lady traveler, had been carefully removed from sight. To this it must be excepted, that the gorgeous cachemire of Ind before mentioned as worn by the countess, was thrown over one of the chairs; and over another, a dressing-robe of violet and gold silk, lined with the fur of the white fox; the gold cord and tassel employed to confine it round the waist being loosely tied about it. An agreeable perfume floated through the chamber; a fire added to its cheerfulness: a thing not amiss at any time in Alpine valleys. Four wax lights stood upon the dressing-table, before which Madame de Schönberg was sitting to be *coiffée* for the night. While the comb passed slowly through the glossy raven waves of her very luxuriant hair, she listened to her maid, gossiping about the new acquaintances of her mistress.

Mademoiselle Clairvoix, *femme-de-chambre* of my Lady Alice, was a young person extremely impracticable, according to Irène. The lady's maids were always ready to talk of the rank and consequence of their ladies, and sometimes of their foibles—their ridicules. She might safely say that to madame, who had none.

The countess smiled.

But Clairvoix did not choose to talk of her young mistress at all, and scarcely of the family. It appeared, though, that they were all of royal blood, and very rich! Clairvoix had a ring, set with rubies, as rare as that which madame herself wore, and which her young lady gave her for nothing at all, purely out of caprice—a *fantaisie de Princesse*. It seemed to Irène not very likely that a *demoiselle* like my Lady Alice, though an heiress, would be allowed to give away an ornament like that. Clairvoix was so extremely pretty, that Irène thought she might have come by so costly a *bijou* in another way, but she was so positive that her mistress gave it her, that one must believe it, Irène supposed, and shrugged her shoulders incredulously. Madame de Schönberg's eye flashed.

"Of course you must believe it. When a girl is discreet, as you describe Mademoiselle Clairvoix, her mistress may well afford to give her a ruby ring. And you will oblige me by not omitting mademoiselle before her name when you speak of her, Irène. That habit of yours is one that is particularly disagreeable to me."

Irène was broken-hearted to have a habit that was disagreeable to her excellency. Had she ever imagined—

"I wish I could believe you as discreet as Mademoiselle Clairvoix," interrupted her mistress.

Irène protested that she was the Phoenix of confidantes and *femmes-de-chambre*. She was incapable of betraying any thing that madame desired to be kept secret, but in fact madame

had nothing, not even a little mystery of the toilet, which most ladies had, at the very least, so that Irène's talent for reserve languished for want of any thing on which it could be exercised. Not that Irène wished madame to confide in her, for she was as incurious as, if tried, she would prove faithful. Here her eloquence was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was Mademoiselle Clairvoix, who desired to speak to madame.

"Let her come in, by all means. A message from your lady?" said the countess.

"If you please, madame, it is solely for your ear," said the young girl, with some embarrassment.

"Have the goodness to sit a few minutes, mademoiselle, while Irène finishes this business of my *coiffure*. There, that will do, Irène. *Dépêche-toi!* My dressing-robe, now, if you please; and fold up and put away the *peignoir*. Very well: now take that small volume in yellow covers on the table, and go to the *salon*. If Monsieur le Marquis be still there, return him the book, with my compliments and thanks. You need not come back, Irène."

"And if Monsieur le Marquis be not there, madame?"

"*Qu'importe!*" said the countess, sharply. "You may take the book to your room and read it. 'Tis a romance by your favorite Sue."

When the door had closed upon the *femme-de-chambre*, the countess rose and tenderly embraced Lady Alice's young attendant.

"What does Irène say of me?" she asked, with a smile.

"Ah, I trust you don't place any confidence in her, Louise. She would be sure to betray it."

"I have just fifteen minutes to talk with you, Clarie," said the countess, taking her watch from the table. "Let us hear Irène's scandals."

"I don't believe there is a word of truth in what she says," said Clarinelle.

"I should not speak to her as I did just now, if she had it in her power to say any thing, truly, to my discredit," replied the countess. "Let me see thy hand, child. A pretty hand, as I remember it ever was. But who gave thee that ring, my sister?"

"Lady Alice."

"Irène will have it 'twas a lover. Thou art not then above receiving gratifications of this sort from thy mistress, notwithstanding thy love for her, and boasted independence?"

Clarinelle did not hesitate to tell the history of the ring. It seemed to quiet an apprehension that just floated indistinctly in the mind of the countess, that some other member of the ducal family, besides her young mistress, might interest this maid, so unlike others as to have an embassadress for her sister.

"Do you think, Clarie, that your young lady is attached to this young *milord* who is traveling with them?"

"Mademoiselle never talks of such things," said Clarinelle.

"What does she talk of? What does she care for?"

"Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is holy," said Clarinelle, with simplicity. "She is very fond of the fine arts, and of nature. I have

heard the Signori, at Rome, say that she is a very fine artist herself. Her pictures are charming. Also, she writes verses which are perfectly sweet to the ear, even to mine, though I know so little the language. She sings like an angel—"

"I am aware of that."

"And plays like St. Cecile," pursued Clarinelle. "There is nothing that a young lady, perfectly brought up and honest, ought to know and do, that mademoiselle does not. But what interests her most is her religion."

"She tries to make you a proselyte?"

"No, indeed. She wishes me to remain a good Catholic, but to think her a good Catholic too, which truly she is."

"Clarie, the fifteen minutes are expired. I have an appointment."

Clarinelle rose, evidently with pleasure, at this termination of what she had been looking forward to, apparently, as a formidable interview.

"Yet stay," pursued her sister, "this affair need not detain me long. Could you wait here?"

"Mademoiselle will be gone to bed," said Clarinelle, hesitatingly.

"I shall not talk to you, Clarie, about the things that I see you dread. It is quite for another reason that I wanted you to come here to-night."

"I could wait a little while."

"Then I must hide you. You must not be seen here by the person I expect. You are very little. Here, ensconce yourself under the arm of the sofa. This cushion will serve for a seat, and this chair, covered with my shawl, for a screen. With the lights on the dressing-table, you are quite in shadow. *Voilà! une belle petite comédie, ma chère!* You must be still as a mouse, mind."

The countess resumed her seat on the sofa. Clarinelle wondered who it could be from whom her sister wished to conceal the fact of their interview. In about half a minute the door opened, without any warning. Lord Wessex entered, approached Madame de Schönberg, and threw himself on one knee at her feet.

It is not our intention to describe in detail the interview that followed, and of which Clarinelle was an astonished witness. Between the sofa and the drapery that concealed the soubrette, was a gap, through which she could easily see the whole scene reflected in the mantle-glass obliquely suspended over the chimney. The incident, indeed, had much less importance in itself than in its relation to what follows of this history, of which the marquis, it is evident, is likely to be the *bête noire et même fort dangereuse*.

It appeared that Lord Wessex had admired the countess in days when admiration (he deemed) must have been legitimate or fruitless. Why he now presumed otherwise, did not very clearly appear, but it was certain that his passion for Lady Alice, however violent, was of such a nature as to admit this criminal distinction. Madame de Schönberg, on the other hand, was apparently a woman to forgive an ebullition of genuine though ill-regulated sentiment, but she was too clear-sighted not to perceive which moiety of a worthless heart was in this instance offered for her acceptance. Yet it seemed not altogether in resentment that she had accorded

him this interview, into the fatal snare of which he had blindly rushed. She required him to choose between herself and her innocent rival; he did not hesitate. She warned him that Lady Alice should be informed of his decision; he smiled at a threat he believed she would never execute, and consented. A chaste, angry, and resolute soul flashing through her fine countenance, which Clarinelle felt to be in that moment hardly less lovely than that of Alice herself, she desired him, if he wished to escape with a mortification the less, to quit her presence instantly: he had the presumption to refuse. She called Clarinelle, who sprang up from her hiding-place like a spirit.

"Traitor!" muttered the marquis. She made no reply, but retreating from him, took Clarinelle's hand.

"And now," she said with excitement, as the young noble quitted the apartment, "you, Clarinelle, must play the waiting-woman of the comedy in good earnest. You are no gossip, Irène says; which is well; but your young mistress must know this affair, and you must tell her. From your lips she will listen to it from the beginning to the end."

CHAPTER VIII.

MONDAY, the sixteenth day of August, was a fine day at Chamouni: our friends were to make the ascent of the Montanvert, and spend the night at the Pavilion, in order to visit the Jardin the day after. They met, by agreement, for breakfast, in Madame de Schönberg's parlor. The marquis was missing; he had left Chamouni in a *char-à-banc* at day-break.

"My lord marquis finds Alpine excursions a bore," said Madame de Schönberg, with a fascinating smile, "and has imagined this unexpected intelligence, in order to avoid the fatigues of the Mer de Glace."

"No," said Edith, significantly, "I am sure that nothing short of real necessity could have induced him to desert us. It must be some domestic event of an afflicting character, or very serious, that he does not choose to impart to us."

"He has no near relative but his sister, I think," observed the countess.

"None legitimate," said Colonel D'Eyncourt, in a rather under-voice, and speaking to the countess only. "But report says that there is, or was, an elder brother who would have been Lord Wessex, had their parents married some years sooner."

"I never heard of that," said the countess, with a blush.

"And I don't believe it," said Lady Edith.—"Really, George, I wish you would never allude to *on dits* of that sort." And she gave her husband a reproving conjugal glance, to remind him of their younger sister's presence. It was curious that the expression of Madame de Schönberg's face seemed to thank Lady Edith. Alice stirred gently her tumbler of foaming cocoa and milk (not being permitted a more stimulating beverage), with an air of soft abstraction. The young lady was certainly a little depressed at the departure of the only cavalier of the party who was not an uncle or a brother. Another

thing that vexed her this morning was, that Clarie, who shared, as has been mentioned, the room of her young mistress at Chamouni, had staid away all night. It was so late, before Madame de Schönberg had finished explaining to her reluctant mind, the beginning of an affair of which she had witnessed only the dénouement, that Clarinelle dared not disturb her young lady, and, at the affectionate instance of the countess, shared her sister's couch. Alice was dressed and had quitted her apartment, when, at a late hour, and with an abashed look, the soubrette presented herself. Alice received her with a studied gentleness that was usual to her when not exactly pleased. This sending for Clarie, and detaining her all night, made Alice both curious and jealous.

After luncheon at the Pavilion, and descending to the Mer de Glace, Mr. Courtenay returned to Chamouni; D'Eyncourt sallied forth to gain the height of the Montanvert, for a view, and Edith retired, pleading fatigue. Alice sat at the open window of the principal room of the Pavilion, with her portfolio open in her lap, putting in the bizarre outlines of the Aiguilles forming the sublime shore of that frozen sea. Madame de Schönberg, who did not number drawing among her accomplishments, approached and watched the operation with interest.

"What a tranquil heart you must have, to move your pencil so quietly and yet so securely. For I can not think it is a mere skill of the hand and the eye. The unerring line that follows your crayon, and produces so faithfully what I see yonder, is not an affair of mere mechanical practice, I am sure."

"On the contrary," said Alice, "it is become so strictly mechanical that often I am unconscious of what the hand and eye are doing. I seem to myself to be dreaming over a beautiful landscape in the idlest reverie, and I find in the end that I have completed a sketch."

"There is a perfect sympathy," said the countess, "between your hand and your heart."

"Due to practice, though," persisted Alice, resolved not to be made out other than a common-place person. "I learned to draw at so early an age," she added, "that I have forgotten it, the same as I have learning to talk."

"I suppose you could draw incorrectly if you tried," said the countess.

"No doubt."

"I have known a great many persons of tranquil manner," pursued Madame de Schönberg—"naturally, I have—and some who prided themselves on it. But most often I have observed that the boasted tranquillity was apathy, or vacancy. A cold, passionless heart, or a selfish, unsympathizing one, or else a dull intellect, was what it generally proceeded from, and that always irritated me; except in my gayer moods, and then it excited my ridicule. I never knew but one very, very calm person that I loved; and his calmness was quite different from yours, Lady Alice."

"Does my calmness irritate you? or excite your ridicule?" said Alice, smiling, but half piqued.

"Calmness does not exactly describe it. I know you think I am flattering you, but it is true for all that. In you, a vivacity that is charmingly spontaneous and natural, alternates

with a bright repose. One never feels sure how soon the lightning may break, or the rain fall, from that effulgent and rosy cloud."

"Really," said Alice, "since we are in a rank vein to-day, I should have thought a metaphor descriptive of an uncertain temper in a beautiful woman, more applicable to you than me."

"My temper was naturally very equable," said the countess, with an instant shade upon a face that in repose had always the soft southern melancholy.

For some minutes there was no sound but that of Alice's busy pencil. Alice wondered who was the very, very calm person that Madame de Schönberg had loved; and then, by a natural transition, she thought of Frederick Clifford and his serene beauty. She thought of equable tempers, and then of Madame de Schönberg again. She seemed great and prosperous:—what had injured her temper? Whence proceeded her sadness? Was it the loss of a former happiness? or the loss of innocence? The countess cut short this reverie by saying—

"I owe your ladyship an apology for keeping Clarinelle last night. I hope you were not displeased with her, poor thing. The fault was wholly mine."

If Alice's replies had hitherto been unsympathizing, we fear that her reply in this instance was almost unamiable. She regretted that her excellency had thought it necessary to give "Mademoiselle Clairvoix" a bed, merely on account of the lateness of the hour. Mademoiselle might have come to her at any hour, and she should give her orders to do so in future. This was expressed with much courtesy. Madame de Schönberg appeared to give it up in despair.

"It was no inconvenience to me," she said, languidly. "I was used to a bed-fellow in my childhood."

Alice was too well-bred to show her surprise, but very surprised she was; for more than one reason; being well aware of Clarie's excessive shyness. She reproached herself for having been so hard-hearted toward one who treated her young favorite so kindly, and she perceived with compunction that the countess had turned away her face to hide the tears which had started, whether at finding herself repelled, or at some softening reminiscence. Alice began immediately to form to herself a new moral image of her companion. She was a little embarrassed for a moment, how to apologize for her unkindness. Words in such a case only make matters worse, and it was not easy to remove the impression, she was aware of having produced, of feeling dislike for her companion. She turned over her portfolio, to a charming portrait in a costume of Southern Italy, painted in an oval formed of flowers, fruits, birds, and bright-winged insects.

"Do you think that a likeness of—CLARIE?" she said, in a hesitating manner.

Madame de Schönberg comprehended at once, gave Alice a look of gratitude, and bent over the picture with humble delight. Alice now talked of many things, while her companion sate almost silent:—of Vietri, where that portrait had been painted; of Pæstum and its temples; of the whole sparkling coast, the mountains and

purple islands; the green lizards on every sunny wall, and the golden oranges hanging above; the glossy hair and pretty jackets of the peasant girls; the soft chanting of the Rosary at sunset, as, on sure-footed little donkeys you wound your way home through many a hamlet. Thus in the course of a few hours the intimacy grew apace.

At night, the story of Clarinelle came upon her like a thunder-clap. That any thing so strange and sinful should happen so near her, and that she herself and Clarie should be involved or interested, affected her as the first death in their own immediate circle affects the young. Of Madame de Schönberg's conduct she knew not what to think. In spite of the generous purpose in respect to herself, and the unaffected detestation of vice, for which she gave the countess full credit, her manner of proceeding did not square exactly with the young Lady Alice's notion of what a woman and a wife owed to herself. Yet the immense relief which she experienced in being now absolutely freed from every shadow of obligation arising out of her brother's wishes, inclined her to view with indulgence the interposition to which she owed it. The deep interest in herself displayed by the countess touched Alice. She thought it would be selfish prudery to repel such a woman's offered friendship; and, pondering over the circumstances of their meeting, and the services the countess had already rendered her, she could not but recognize the agency which those who believe in Providence see in every thing.

"Why was Madame de Schönberg traveling without her husband?" It appeared to be, at any rate, with his full sanction. In conversation with Lady Edith, the countess had let fall that Count Schönberg had been with her at Martigny, and Alice, without any good reason for so doing, had mentally identified him with the venerable, white-haired personage who had bowed to the countess and herself in the corridor at the inn. If she were correct in this, there must exist between them an immense disparity of age. Madame de Schönberg was certainly younger than Edith, and Edith was only turned of twenty-four. Her complexion, even by daylight, intimated a youthfulness that might associate her rather with the younger of the two sisters; and though her manners were very formed, her reserve toward the gentlemen of the party indefinably resembled that of an unmarried girl rather than of a matron. It was quite clear to Alice—observant, though inexperienced, that Madame de Schönberg sincerely preferred the society of her own sex; and that between Colonel D'Eyncourt and Mr. Courtenay, she gave the latter decidedly the preference. Indeed, she entertained and interested Mr. Courtenay very much, by her accounts of German Catholicism, the state of religion in the Austrian capital, and so on. That very evening, at the Pavilion, also, the countess happened to remark how happy Lady Edith and Colonel D'Eyncourt seemed to be. This led them, somehow, to allude to their having no children, which they both confessed was a drawback to their mutual felicity; and as it was understood that Madame de Schönberg had been married a couple of years, it was natural (when people were talking so frankly of themselves) to ask her if she had

not any. Her emotion was extreme, to be manifested by a woman of the world. She crimsoned as she said she had not, and tears came to her eyes.

"Perhaps," said Alice to her young attendant, "If I knew Madame de Schönberg's history, this procedure of hers might appear very different."

"I am sure it would, mademoiselle."

"But what is the tie between you and this great lady, Clarie?"

"Madame is my—that is, I am her—*sœur de lait*," replied the *soubrette*, blushing at this true falsehood.

"Really!" said Alice, with a glance of penetration at the girl's changing countenance. "I am afraid this will come in as a fib, in your next confession, *Petite*."

The next day, Alice and Madame de Schönberg were thrown very much together during the excursion to the Jardin and return to Chamouni. Both were more active pedestrians than either Lady Edith or Clarinelle. Assisted by their guides, they accomplished several enterprising feats. The physical sympathy which this sort of companionship generates is a strong tie, and attaches even to the inferior animals; as is seen in sportsmen; in the devotion of guides; in the passion of the Arab for the steed that bears him over the desert. The weather continued so fine, that they remained several days at Chamouni, making an excursion every day, and returning to their quarters to dine together at night-fall. After dinner, Edith always retired immediately, quite worn out. Her husband soon followed; and Mr. Courtenay, who had very strict notions of clerical decorum, would not linger. Alice and the countess passed together the evenings, which daily lengthened. It was the first friend our heroine ever possessed. What a stride, indeed, do we take with our first friendship!—the first affection not founded on nature and duty—the first acquisition of our own hearts!

The last evening of their stay at Chamouni arrived. Madame de Schönberg had been extremely depressed all day.

"'Tis hardly a week since I first saw you, Lady Alice, but what a week for me! Now, we are separated; and to you it is nothing. You go with those you love, and by whom you are idolized. I shall be alone, as before, and so much more lonely. You bear with you the only two beings in the world upon whom my heart can or dare repose—yourself and Clarinelle."

Alice rose and went to the window. The

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slender crescent of the new moon shed a feeble ray over the smooth, drift-like crest of Mont Blanc, who, vast and sky-piercing as he is, seemed scarcely to overtop his snow-crowned satellites. She gazed awhile, and tapped upon the pane unconsciously with her rose-tipped fingers.

"What," she murmured to herself, "is her connection with Clarinelle? In face there is some shadowy resemblance to some one that I have seen before, and which haunts me like a half-remembered strain of music; but it is certainly not a resemblance to Clarie."

She returned to Madame de Schönberg, who had watched her movements with anxiety.

"Countess," said the young Lady Alice, "it is not from selfish considerations that I hesitate to say—take Clarinelle. It would pain me to part with her; I can hardly say how much. Even her skilful services I scarcely could replace. But that is nothing. I would make a greater sacrifice for you. But she is committed to me as a trust. She is an orphan, as no doubt you know; without a relative, as I have always supposed, in the world. I have permitted myself, I dare say, unwisely, to cultivate in her, tastes and feelings more suited to the position she holds in my heart than to that she occupies in our family. Should harm come to her after I had suffered her to leave me, it would lie heavily on my conscience. I do not know that she *would* leave me, but as there is some tie between you, the nature of which is unknown to me, I can not be sure that she would not. She told me once that she was your foster-sister, but although I never knew her to tell an untruth, I did not quite believe her."

"We are sisters in the strict sense of the term. We owe not only our first nourishment, but our birth, to the same mother."

"This is very wonderful."

"If you will permit me, I will tell you all my story."

"Can you doubt it would gratify me?"

Alice, indeed had only been withheld by delicacy from directly asking it. The friends adjourned to Madame de Schönberg's own room. The sofa was drawn toward the fire. Tea was brought in. Irène was dismissed, and Clarinelle received her lady's orders not to sit up for her. When they were at length alone, Madame de Schönberg, after an earnest look at her companion, as if to read in her face the assurance of her sympathy, began a narrative which must be permitted to arrest for awhile the apparent progress of this history.

BOOK IV.

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF MADAME DE SCHÖNBERG.

CHAPTER I.

"I MUST go back to the year before the French invaded Italy," said the countess, "and tell you a story of a beautiful Roman model, named Annunziata. She was a native of a small borgo in the Siennese, and possessed one of those faces and forms which are still to be met with in the villages of Etruria. I have seen such girls ascending the steep street of some hill-built city of southern Italy, bearing on their heads water-vases of classic pottery, moving with a grace like your own, dear Alice, and their nymph-like shapes as elegantly pliant.

"It seems a perilous profession, yet many of the models are strictly virtuous, and such was Annunziata. After all, in the eye of art, clothes are only drapery, and the Artist sees, mentally, every one undressed, as God sees us all. This remark is not my own; it was made to me long ago, by a friend who was accustomed to say the frankest and truest things."

"I dare say," said Alice, "but if you ramble in this way your story will be very long."

"I will come to the point," said the countess. "Annunziata was a model of the chaste sort. She was so reputed; but in time it happened that one of her employers, a young sculptor, doubting, perhaps, the existence of virtue itself, as many in those days did, offered her an affront, which the Italian girl at once avenged and defended herself against, by a fatal stroke of the stiletto which, according to the custom of her district she wore in her hair. She was arrested imprisoned for some time, and finally, liberated on the intercession of a cardinal, for whom the unhappy young man had been modeling the statue for which Annunziata had posed. There was great curiosity to see the heroine of so tragical an adventure; and among others, a young Englishman, or rather Irishman, of high family, who then resided at Rome, sought her out. His name was De Courcy."

"De Courcy!" said Alice, a light breaking upon her at once

"Yes. He was paternally descended from the Cliffords of the — family. The name of De Courcy had been assumed on marrying an heiress, but the present representatives have returned to the paternal name."

"I understand," said Alice.

"You have heard of the manners of those times. De Courcy, I believe, was rather influenced by the conventional morals of his class and society, than a libertine in feelings. Yet one can not help one's indignation to think that it cost him a long pursuit to overcome the virtuous resistance of Annunziata, even after he had succeeded in inspiring the untutored Italian with a passion such as the noble dames of her country, had they felt it, would have yielded to scarcely with a thought of self-control; as indeed the greater part sinned without that excuse. These things are dreadful, but true. De Courcy loved his victim, however; and at last,

discovering, after nearly a year's guilty intimacy—during which, of course, Annunziata had been an inmate of his palace, that she was about to make him a father, he determined to violate all the prejudices of caste by making her his wife."

"He was very wicked," said Alice; "but if he really did that, I shall think that he had not so bad a heart as I thought at first."

"He was prevented from doing it by a confession of Annunziata herself. She had been unfaithful to him. A young French *émigré*, De Courcy's secretary, had completed the bewilderment of her moral sense, and the destruction of her self-respect, betraying, at the same time, his patron and benefactor. The revenge of the latter was to compel the culprits to marry. He sent them to Ireland, and the elder Mr. De Courcy, on his son's recommendation, made Belmont (he had dropped the aristocratic shibboleth) agent for his estate. De Courcy did not think himself acquitted of his obligations to Annunziata by her infidelity; and perhaps he could not have discharged them in any other way. About six months after her marriage to Belmont, was born her only child, the image of Mr. De Courcy even in infancy, and which Annunziata always protested, even in the depth of her shame and contrition, to be certainly his.

"Belmont prospered. He became the agent and lessee of one of the greatest absentee properties in Ireland. He owed this, too, his second great lift in the world, to the influence of his wife's beauty, but not shamefully, as in the first instance; for the conduct of Annunziata after her marriage was beyond reproach. Her confession—a mere act of honesty, it is true—seemed the turning-point in her moral destiny. No repentance could repair her fault for this world, but that matters little now that she has no doubt obtained by its sincerity a peaceful and purified conscience in another."

Alice could not help observing with what feeling and conviction Madame de Schönberg said this.

"It was on one of Belmont's visits to Paris, to confer on affairs with the late Lord Wessex (that was the estate he managed) that his reputed son saw my mother and Clarinelle's, then *première femme-de-chambre* to the marchioness. The Belmonts had apartments in Lord Wessex's hotel, and dined at the *maître d'hôtel's* table. This functionary was the father of Lucille, and I have heard my father say that his dinners were more exquisite than his master's. The daughter—the most charming of soubrettes—did the honors. Lord Wessex himself was often a guest, and sometimes others, not less superior to the entertainers. Lucille was very much admired and flattered by them all, and at nineteen was not to be much blamed for liking all that more than was wise. The offer of a magnificent settlement by Lord Wessex first showed her in what light she ought to consider the condescending notice by which she had felt so flattered. My father, on the other hand, perfectly

unused to female society, was really captivated by the sparkling young Frenchwoman, who gave him a flattering preference; and the way it ended was, that when old Belmont not only refused his consent, but became furious at the bare thought of such a mésalliance, and Lucille's father forbade their interviews, yet would not quit the service of Lord Wessex, indignation pleaded too well the cause of passion: the lovers fled together. In France, that could not be to the altar."

The countess paused, covered her face with her hands, and seemed unwilling to proceed. Alice tenderly soothed her.

"What a contrast between us!" said the countess, passionately. "You a maiden of a royal stock, every step in whose pedigree is authenticated by the seal of wedlock; I, a creature soiled in her very birth, inheriting an illegitimacy of two generations!"

"But has not our baptism communicated to us both the grace of the only pure nativity that ever was? And, of the two, it might be harder to cleanse my birth from the stain of earthly pride, so unbecoming in the children of Eve, than yours from the shame that is the natural portion of all of us."

But here it will be convenient for us to begin another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

"My father and mother," pursued the countess, "lived together, in great privacy, for two years; in fact, till their funds were completely exhausted; when my father proceeded to Ireland, in the hope of getting assistance from the inexorable elder Belmont, whose whole paternal instinct was centered in this boy, though he knew very well he was no son of his. My mother was left in Paris with me—an infant of twelve months. Old Belmont had before communicated to his step-son the secret of his birth, and had pointed out to him that, as his real father was still unmarried, it was by no means improbable that he might one day acknowledge him, and make him his heir. But he certainly never would do it if my father were to form a matrimonial connection of such a discreditable nature—marry a *femme-de-chambre*, who had been his mistress for two years! Pshaw!—he assured him that if he did any thing of the sort, he would himself disinherit him. But if he would give up my mother, and write to her that their connection must cease, he would settle an annuity on her and her child. And really, most parents in the same case would have done the same; and, the power of the purse being on their side, would have succeeded, as the elder Belmont did. But my mother, wounded and heart-broken, had the spirit to refuse the proffered annuity. After vain attempts to obtain another situation, after struggling for a couple of years to maintain herself by her needle, and nearly starving herself that her child might not know the want of bread, she at last, for my sake alone, I believe, married Clarinelle's father, a retired butler, once her father's friend, and well acquainted with all her history.

"Knowing how well Clarie has been brought

up, you will believe that my earliest training, under my mother's care, was careful and pure. Our circumstances, though precarious, depending on M. Clairvoix's life, were easy. Mamma, having respect to my father's gentle blood, meant to bring me up as a teacher of music, while her highest hope for Clarie was to place her one day advantageously in her own ancient *métier*. I had, then, a piano, and a music-teacher, as far back as I can remember. Mamma also taught me every thing that she herself knew. Our *ménage* was modest, but very cheerful, gay with sunlight and flowers, and we were always prettily dressed. You can imagine us taking our Sunday dinner at some splendid *restaurant*;—mamma, elegant as a young marquise; Clarie and myself, two pretty brunettes, though in a style so different, with muslin frocks and rich black hair, *si soigné*! papa Clairvoix, a grave, dark man, with a high, narrow forehead, and hair white as snow, careful of his costume as an ancient butler. I remember, as if it were yesterday, how much attention we used to attract.

"On one of these occasions, when I was ten years old and Clarie five, I observed a gentleman sitting alone at the table next ours, who watched us during our repast with more than ordinary intentness. Even at that age I remarked that he was making a dinner of some research, ordering the viands, the wine, and the fruit, which perhaps I coveted with the *naïve* epicurism of childhood, but in which papa Clairvoix never indulged us all at once. Mamma sate next the stranger, and of course with her back to him. When papa Clairvoix had finished his coffee, and we rose, the stranger rose also. The restaurant, by this time, was brilliantly lighted, and the walls were formed of looking-glass. As mamma turned to adjust her bonnet, I observed the stranger look at her in the mirror. She started, exclaimed 'Henri!' and fell. There was great confusion; Clarie cried; papa Clairvoix was beside himself; every body running to assist. The stranger alone was self-possessed. He suggested to M. Clairvoix to order a *fiacre* to be called, and when it came, lifted the still insensible form of my mother, and carried her to it. Papa Clairvoix thanked him with warmth.

"'You owe me no thanks,' said the stranger, haughtily, 'but I should be happy if I might send to-morrow, to inquire if madame is better.'

"M. Clairvoix gave him our address.

"The next day, while I was practicing in our modest *salon*, the stranger called, and, coming in very quietly, did not attract my attention till I had finished my song. I jumped up immediately from the piano, and was going to escape, but he took my hand, drew me to him, kissed me, and said, 'You play and sing very well for your age, my dear little Louise.' Then mamma came in. I remember that she would not suffer him to embrace her, as he offered to do at first. She wept a great deal during the whole interview. Of course I soon understood that it was my father.

"The hope of being acknowledged by Mr. de Courcy, and becoming his heir, which had been held out to my father by old Mr. Belmont had been finally disappointed by Mr. de Courcy's dying intestate; but the death of old Belmont himself had put my father in possession of a

very considerable fortune, though not, by any means, of the position to which he considered himself entitled. He had come to Paris, steeped in wealth, but disappointed in objects that he had more at heart. His first adventure was this *rencontre* with our family. The sight of his daughter, and my promise of beauty and intelligence, gave him a new object in life. What he wanted was, that mamma should give me up entirely to him, and though the proposal was to cut her heart-strings, he knew how to work upon her maternal ambition so as at length to prevail. I was fitted, under her superintendence, with a wardrobe such as suited a young lady of fortune and family, and after a sorrowful, sorrowful farewell, which I little thought, however, was the prelude of so long a parting, I passed under the protection of a parent so lately a stranger, and entered upon a new condition of existence.

"He took me to London. We traveled post, with two carriages. My father had several servants; I had a maid to attend me; I fancied myself a princess. This grandeur, my father's fondness, and the novelties I was constantly seeing, drove my loss from my memory. Soon after our arrival in London, he took me to a villa in the neighborhood of the metropolis, occupied as a boarding-school for young ladies of the best families. Here, under the name of Louise de Belmont, I passed nearly seven years, learned the language and the manners of England, and became a very accomplished girl. Nobody knew who I was, and I did not myself know; which, and not being able, like other girls, to talk of my family, or even to mention the name of my mother, were the chief drawbacks to my felicity. Of my school-fellows, by whom I was generally liked, I believe, I need mention only two as connected in any way with my subsequent life. Lady Augusta Dudley, our friend Lord Wessex's sister, a clever, very clever, heartless girl, showed me, from the very first, a civil but decided dislike. Lady Isabel Fitzgerald, the daughter of Lord Mortmain, the only Catholic in the school besides myself, was my chief friend—warm-hearted, quick-tempered, and too lively for the English taste in manners. Her mother was a sister of the Mr. de Courcy before-mentioned, and consequently she was, in fact, my cousin, though neither of us had an idea of that. She was decidedly the beauty of the school, as Augusta was the genius; and I, to say truth, the favorite.

"Really, I ought to have been. I was as lady-like as any of my high-born companions, ingenuous, sweet-tempered, pure as our dear Clarie, and sincerely devout. On the subject of my family, where my father had enjoined me silence, not the least hint was ever won from me by teasing, or extorted by surprise. Yet I don't remember that all the while I was at the *pension* I ever told an untruth, and fibbing, you know, is proverbially a girl's vice to which I am afraid every one of my companions was a good deal addicted. So, I was not a bad girl, was I?"

"A very good one, by your own account."

"My vacations were spent with my father at his villa, where I saw no society whatever: or in traveling. My school-fellows had always tales to tell after these periods, of people, and

things, and gayeties—the foretastes of society and the great world where all were destined to shine. I had nothing of the sort to relate, and though it was clear enough to them all, and to me, that my father, whoever he was, was a very rich man, and I his heiress, it was not less clear that he was not in society at all, and that I probably never should be. As I could not but be infected with the worldly atmosphere I breathed, this gave me, as my intelligence developed, a great deal of unhappiness, which, however, my pride led me to conceal. But at last, when I was about sixteen, and Isabel Fitzgerald, who was a year older, was going to quit the *pension*, she got her mother's permission to invite me to spend the Easter holidays with them."

"Ah," said Alice, "now your story begins."

And indeed, we shall here take the liberty of modifying a little Madame de Schönberg's story as it fell from her lips, but not so as to exclude all Alice's occasional interruptions, nor departing from the narrator's very words, except in the interests of brevity.

CHAPTER III.

"'What a beautiful park!' I exclaimed, as we drove through the gates.

"'Yes, it is pretty enough,' said Isabel. 'Mortmain is papa's principal seat, you know. We are not regular absentees. Papa will live a part of the year on his Irish property, which is the reason—at least one reason—that mamma placed me *en pension*. The fact is, we are there about the greatest people in our county, and here we are nothing. Quite nobodies!' she added, laughing, 'as you will soon find out. Now there is old Lady Devereux, our nearest neighbor; she is a personage, I do assure you. You have heard of Glentworth. 'Tis one of the most famous places in England. That is a park! You would think it illimitable, and such herds of deer! She lives there all the year round. Then there is Lord Devereux, her son. He is a personage too, but not so great a one since it is known he won't have his mother's vast estates. Otherwise, Charley Devereux, who has been of age these two years, would be an immense match. He is pretty well, as it is. The Devereux estate in this county is twenty thousand a year, and they have another very good one in Westmoreland.'

"'And pray how much a year has Lady Devereux?' I asked, hearing that twenty thousand or so was only 'pretty well.'

"'It is incalculable,' said Isabel, who was slightly prone to exaggeration. 'She has so many sorts of property; owns a whole parish in London, I believe; has estates in six counties, and is certainly the greatest proprietor in this.'

"'And who is to inherit this fortune, if not her son?'

"'Her grandson,' said Isabel, with a *nonchalant* air, 'who, by-the-by, is my cousin; Augustus Clifford is his name. His mother is Lady Devereux's only child by a second marriage.'

"Meanwhile we had drawn up before the portico of a Palladian palace. Isabel's father came

out into the hall to welcome us, and embraced my friend very heartily.

"This is Mademoiselle de Belmont of course," he said, with a very attentive regard at me. 'Lady Mortmain and myself are most happy to see you at Lyston Hall, mademoiselle.'

"Lord Mortmain was an old man of very unpretending appearance, and kind without parade. I was shown to rooms, such as, I have since learned, are not usually assigned to young lady visitors; a bed and dressing-room, both spacious, beautifully furnished, and the balconied windows looking out on one of the most agreeable views of the park, with a glimpse of the towers of Glentworth, as Isabel presently pointed out to me, four miles off, but crowning a majestic eminence. The whole country between was richly sylvan, and, on Easter Monday six years ago, was already, although it was only the end of April, blooming and verdant like May.

"I thought Mademoiselle de Belmont would have the little room next to mine," said my friend, with some surprise. To which the snowy-capped housekeeper who unlocked the doors, replied, that mademoiselle was to have this apartment by his lordship's, her ladyship's father's particular desire.

"Of course," said Isabel, "these two rooms are preferable to the *one*, in every respect, though I should have liked our being together."

"When my friend had left me, while my maid unpacked my things, I examined with curiosity these very preferable rooms. I could not discover that they were prettier than those which I was accustomed to occupy at my father's villa, but they were extremely convenient and complete, with furniture of buhl and marqueterie, and draperies of rose-colored silk. What attracted my attention more than these things, was a picture over the statuary mantle-piece in the bed-room.

"It represented a beautiful woman, in a costume with which I was unacquainted; a scarlet bodice, and petticoat of amber silk; the nobly-swelling bust concealed with a kerchief of rich lace; another doubled over the head in a square form, and depending behind to the shoulders. I see the countenance now, as if it were real: the oval face, the finely-penciled brows and eye of passionate languor, the complexion of sunny olive; the braids of glossy raven hair, from whose massive coil protruded the handle of a silver stiletto. The back ground was sky, and the desolate Roman campagna, identified by the blue outline of the Sabine hills, and the aqueducts striding over the middle distance. The frame was elaborate and richly gilt, and in a wreath of flowers entwined with serpents that formed its lower part, was a label in ultra-marine, with the name—'Annunziata,' and the date 'Roma, 1795.'"

"Your grandmother's portrait!"

"Even so. I amused myself with looking at it, and thinking that it was my own style of face, and wondering who it could be, till Isabel sent in some white roses, and my maid had got out my newest white muslin, and I had to dress. My black hair—black as Annunziata's—curled in my neck. My figure was slight and girlish. I confessed, as I looked at myself in the swing glass, that I was well enough. Isabel came in for me; we were dressed alike, as we had

agreed. To cover my nervousness I asked about the picture.

"Oh, that picture! There is a history about that picture. It is a portrait, and of a very improper person, I am afraid, to be hanging in your room, my dear. It was given papa by my uncle De Courcy; no, not given; but papa was to keep it for somebody else. When my uncle was here, some years before his death, he had these rooms, and the picture was placed in its present position at his request. I suppose I ought not to know any thing about it, but the truth is," she added, whispering, "the original was his mistress in Italy—see—forty years ago. Papa knows a great deal more about it. If you are afraid of such a mysterious portrait in your room, Louise, or disapprove of such a scandalous one, I will have it removed."

"No, Bella," I said, with a slight laugh, "I beg you'll not do that. The picture can't do me any harm, and I find it rather romantic to have it in my room."

"Well, now I remember another point of the story," said Isabel. "The original once committed a murder, and with that very stiletto you see sticking in her hair. Whether it was in a fit of Italian jealousy, or in defense of her honor, I don't know. Such stories are never related in full before little girls, you know; and I don't remember, either, who told me so much as this. But suppose she should appear to you, Loo? I can tell you the old hall was haunted before it was burnt down in the civil wars, as Mortmain is to this day. There is a story about the way the latter got the name, to make your hair stand on end."

"I was a little disturbed at this, for I had my share of superstition, as Isabel was well aware.

"I see I have frightened you," she said. "Now if I thought there was the slightest chance of her coming back, I would sleep here a night myself."

"But I had now a more immediate horror to undergo, and scarcely easier to overcome than that of a *revenante*: namely, to be presented for the first time to a drawing-room full of people, to be introduced to ladies and gentlemen, and I know not what. After being kissed on both cheeks by Lady Mortmain, and myself kissing the hand of a bishop *in partibus*, and getting a bow from Lady St. Aubyn, Isabel's eldest sister, my friend drew me into a more youthful circle, and introduced me particularly to Mary St. Aubyn, her niece, but her senior by several years. There were several young men in this group, gathered where the sunset came in at a Venetian window; and I felt the color of conscious *mauvaise honte* mount painfully to my cheek, as all eyes were directed to me. I answered in low, stifled monosyllables to the questions addressed to me; and, to add to my distress, venturing once to look up, I caught a supercilious smile on Miss St. Aubyn's face, and saw that Isabel, with her Irish quickness, was blushing from vexation at my *gaucherie*. Four or five young men were gazing at me with their formidable and unfamiliar eyes, and, as it seemed to me, quite intolerably near. I was obliged to turn my head away to hide tears of mortification at proving unequal to an occasion so simple. How *mauvais ton*! I said to myself; how silly, how weak!

but that did not make me stronger. It grew worse every minute, for my tears were already observed, and I was on the point of crying outright."

"Poor child!" said Alice, laughing.

"But, as I turned away my head, and affected to look out of the window, more in despair than to avoid an exposure that had become inevitable, I encountered the gaze of a young man standing apart from the rest, and half ensconced in the curtains. It was a head and face of such extreme beauty as instantly riveted my attention. In that flush of western light, they seemed carved in some softly-tinted marble. But what struck me more than their beauty was the steadfast tranquillity of the owner's regard. It was not a glance of sympathy, which at that moment would have exhausted my slender remaining stock of composure; neither was it indifference, but an intense, yet unimpassioned interest, as if he seized the opportunity of reading the depths of a soul that so mere a trifle could agitate. I can not describe how I instantly felt the contagion of that tranquillity. My emotion subsided inexplicably to myself: I dried my tears with quiet self-possession, without caring whether any one noticed it or not. That singularly beautiful visage—for his person was entirely concealed—rewarded me, as I may say, by a smile, the slightest, but the most captivating; and I involuntarily turned round again with an answering smile on my own now composed face; and I saw, in one glance that I now gave them, by Mary St. Aubyn's look of disappointment, and Isabel's of triumph, and by the change from pity to something just kinder than admiration in the young men, that I had retrieved my character. A first embarrassment, so quickly and frankly overcome, might even be a charm, as I instantly thought; it showed that I was ingenuous and yet not a simpleton, sensitive yet spirited. How such thoughts (for the first time) came into my head; whether it was the spontaneous development of feminine vanity, or a sympathetic communication from another mind, I can not tell. When dinner was announced, and our elders began to move off, the young man whose radiant regard had been of so timely assistance to me, came forward and offered me his arm, giving, at the same time, a finger in welcome to Isabel, who said, 'how do you do, sir?' and it immediately struck me how much he resembled her.

"Of course he sat next me at table, and as soon as the chaplain had finished a long Latin grace (such as I naturally had never before heard, so that it arrested my attention, reminding me most agreeably that I was in a Catholic family), he addressed me in my native language, with the purest accent, and in a voice of the sweetest vibration, that acted instantly on my southern organization.

"Have you been long in England, mademoiselle?"

"Six years, monsieur," I said, looking him in the face as much as to say, 'are you French?'

"Ah, then, no doubt you speak English?" he said, smiling.

"I can hardly tell which language I speak most easily at present," I replied.

"I perceive that you have no accent. And pray how do you like England?"

"Oh, you need not ask Miss de Belmont her catechism, Fred," said Isabel, 'I assure you she is quite perfect in it.'"

Here Alice leaned forward with a deep blush, to ask, "And who was your new acquaintance?"

"Another of my cousins, the younger son of Mr. Clifford, of Castle de Courcy, whose eldest son, you will remember, was to be the heir of Glentworth. I shall have a good deal to tell you about him."

Alice sank back again and listened with wondering attention.

"He soon quitted the catechism, as Isabel called it, and indeed his talk flowed in the most winding and sparkling current; though the topics were common-place, and the spirit often boyish, especially in remarks which he occasionally addressed to Isabel. I perceived that he was very youthful, certainly not older than my friend, for his chin and lip were as smooth as hers.

"That serious personage on Lady Mortmain's right," he said, naming to me, *sotto voce*, the different people present, 'is Lord —, the head of the house of Clifford. Lady — sits next Lord Mortmain. You should observe her dress; black velvet and point lace, and the ribbon with the order of Maria Theresa on her breast. They are both excellent people, who, in the nineteenth century, have as much faith as their progenitors had in the Crusades. That fair girl, with a diamond cross on her white neck, is their daughter, Lady Mary, a princess of the empire. There is one sister that is a saint, but this is a princess, and I hardly know which I love best. The old gentleman next Lady Mary is Lord Battersea, who married one of Lady Mortmain's sisters. Lady Battersea died a year ago. We have just laid aside our mourning, I perceive. It is their son, Clifford de Courcy Taylor, next to Mary St. Aubyn. That is a match; they are to be married in June. I don't like cousins marrying, do you, Mademoiselle de Belmont? Now, there is Augustus Clifford—he sits between you and Isabel—he can tell you what he thinks of cousins marrying. Augustus,' he added, raising his voice, 'Miss de Belmont wants to know what is your opinion of cousins marrying.'

"Had I a cousin like Mademoiselle de Belmont," said this neighbor, before I had time to protest, 'and met her now for the first time, I should fall in love with her, I am sure, and of course wish to marry her. But my cousins, that I have known all my life, seem so many sisters, don't they, Isabel?'

"What my brother says," said Frederick, with a malicious smile, while Isabel colored, 'reminds me what a family party we are here. I believe I am related to every individual at the table except yourself.'

"I seem to be out of place," I said.

"You should come to Glentworth, as I hope you will: you will meet a very different set there. I call even my father 'Mr. Clifford,' when he comes there, from inveterate habit.'

"Do you live at Glentworth?" I said, laughing.

"Chiefly. My father has a place in the county, but he spends so much time in London and Ireland, that Clifford Grove is not inhabited more than a month or two in the year. I can't change my quarters so often. I should never form reg-

ular habits. So, I live with my grandmother, the only member of the family sufficiently steady for me. She never quits Glentworth, and she never will be alone there either. So we have visitors without end. When I get tired of living among strangers, I come over to Lyston, where I am tolerably sure of meeting only my own kin. I can hardly persuade myself that you are not some sort of a cousin, meeting you here.'

"Frederick Clifford opened the door when the ladies rose. As Isabel and myself went out last, arm in arm, she held up her finger threateningly. He bowed his beautiful head. Quick as thought, she gave him a sound box on the ear, and ran out of the room. As I came up to her again we changed sides.

"That was for his impertinence about cousins.'

"Just before we reached the drawing-room, in passing through an ante-room, very ill-lighted, I felt an arm glide round my waist, and at the same instant the warm contact of lips on my cheek. I made a violent start, and a quick exclamation in my native language.

"I beg ten thousand pardons,' said Frederick. 'I really took you for my cousin.'

"Isabel saw instantly what happened, though the kiss had been too gentle for the least sound to be heard. She laughed at first; then said, with affected severity,—'And suppose it had been your cousin, sir?'"

CHAPTER IV.

"THAT half-hour with the ladies in the drawing-room was the time when of all my life I most felt the sense of loneliness. I had, at first, to undergo an amiable cross-examination, the object of which was to find out who in the world I was. But I had not baffled for six years the remorseless curiosity of twenty school-girls, to be plucked of my secret by the restrained pecking of these high-born dames. That I had a younger sister in France, and did not even know whether my mother was living or not, was all that they could elicit; and then Lady Mortmain, thinking this unfair, came to my relief, and inquired into my accomplishments. Immediately, all those who had been listening very attentively to all I said, began to talk. A new fashion was eagerly discussed, then a new marriage. Nobody really cared for me. Even Isabel sate apart and conversed in whispers with Mary St. Aubyn. I was very dejected, and not least so to think of Frederick Clifford's kiss—a rudeness not intended for me, but which seemed to mark me as a person to whom no consideration was due. With this feeling, when the gentlemen came in and he immediately approached me, I did not blush, as one might from merely startled modesty, but looked down with a mortified air. He dropped into the sofa between me and Lady Mortmain, who good-naturedly made room for him.

"I can't find it in my heart to regret very much my little mistake of just now,' he said.

"Fie!' said Lady Mortmain, 'you have not been rude to Mademoiselle de Belmont, I hope? I am really mortified.'

"It was Bella,' he replied, 'who boxed my

ears for asking the most innocent question in the world. I could not pass over such an affront, you know, my dear aunt; and being, unfortunately, very near-sighted—'

"Near-sighted! I always heard you had the vision of an eagle.'

"For my own proper prey; but to tell one beautiful girl from another—'

"Mademoiselle de Belmont blushes for you,' retorted Lady Mortmain.

"Oh, I promise her that I will make no more mistakes,' replied Frederick; 'but to begin with this fortunate one, I mean to love her more than Isabel, who is a little coquette, and never cared for me, I am convinced. See, she is making love to my brother at present, to provoke my jealousy; but it is of no use. All that is entirely over.'

"Lady Mortmain blushed and looked vexed. Frederick, who seemed very satisfied with this result, turned to me with a whisper.

"There is no native power of the mind without its occasional use,' he said. 'I intend, tonight, to tease every body here but you. Now let us go and mimic Bella's cousinly agaceries with my brother. How affectionately she looks over his shoulder at those prints!'

"Indeed there was not an individual whom Frederick did not succeed in evidently annoying, by his open comments upon Isabel's manœuvres. Augustus himself asked her to sing, by way of a diversion. All her friends expressed the greatest delight.

"Poor child!' said Frederick to me, quite audibly, 'I see how it is. My brother is an enthusiast for music: and she has sacrificed every thing to it.'

"You must sing with Fred,' said Augustus, praising her performance warmly.

"Fred has lost his voice,' said Isabel, pouting.

"But he has got another, though.'

"Last Christmas he croaked like a raven,' she said, looking at him with a glance of girlish resentment.

"At present I only croak in a metaphorical sense,' said Frederick. 'But I shan't sing with Bella. We have quarreled. And besides, Mademoiselle de Belmont is going to favor us. Ah,' he exclaimed when I had finished, addressing his brother, and saying what I suppose was really felt by all, 'that is really something more than the mechanical execution that every young lady brings away from a finishing establishment.'

"No one sings like Louise,' said Isabel, in a slightly tremulous voice. 'I could have told you that.'

"In short, I felt that he had not only rendered himself, for the time, very disagreeable to every body, but me the object of jealousy to my friend and her family. I would gladly have accepted the insignificance, which at first I had felt so painfully, in exchange for this unpleasant importance; yet even Frederick's imprudent partisanship gave me a delightful sense of having at least one friend, and I even began to think with pleasure of the kiss to which I believed I owed it. But now he proposed that we should begin dancing, without which Easter Monday must not pass away. I need not say that this was an accomplishment in which a young Parisienne might be expected to shine in England.

As we stood up for the quadrille, the moment before the music commenced, I caught Isabel's eye; and Frederick, who was my partner, said to me in a triumphant whisper—'Now, in five minutes, you will have every young man in the room for an admirer, and every young lady for an enemy.' 'Well,' I thought, 'in that case I had better dance as well as I can.' And he was quite right, for, after the first quadrille the young ladies unanimously refused to dance any more. 'Then we will waltz,' said Frederick; and to this they all consented; 'for now,' he continued to me, in a whisper, 'Bella will be the partner of Augustus; and every young lady will have her partner to herself.'

"How malicious to others! how kind to me!" I thought, as we whirled round the spacious saloon, my waist sustained by his arm. It was the first time I had ever danced, not to say, waltzed, with any but girls, or my own father, and I felt all the softening influence of its familiarity. It is like the English custom of giving the hand to every one—is it not? With one that you love, it becomes a tender symbol; with a stranger, it is a mere ceremony; and you may give it with a repulsive coldness, where you dislike. Frederick's brilliant eyes were bent upon mine with the same deep yet tranquil interest which had dissipated like magic the embarrassment of my *début*; that sense of isolation, so dreadful to youth, had yielded to the sympathy for which he seemed to single me out. 'Be a brother to me, or any thing that you like'—was the language of my heart, which all but rose to my lips. At that moment, his figure being interposed between me and the rest, his lips touched my forehead. The next thing that I remember was cold water being dashed on my face; I opened my eyes and found myself lying on a sofa, with Lady Mortmain and Isabel standing over me.

"The movement made her giddy," said Lady Mortmain.

"She never fainted before," said Isabel.

"It is the spring of the year," said Lady Mortmain, very kindly.

"But you, dear Alice, look pale and weary—this does not, can not, interest you?"

"I assure you," said Alice, "that I am very much interested, and not weary at all."

CHAPTER V.

"THE next morning, Isabel invited me to walk in the park after breakfast. I thought she was going to take me to task for my behavior to her cousin of the night before; but, instead of that, she began immediately an exculpation of her own toward Augustus.

"I don't deny that I should like to marry him," she said, 'and to tell you the truth, all the Clifford connection expect it. But why I try to engage his affections is not for ambition, Loo, any more than for what is called love. I pity him so much. He has been very hardly used, and terribly disappointed.'

"Who could have the heart to misuse so fine a young man, and heir to so great a property?" I asked, unconsciously, almost, falling into Frederick's vein of ridicule.

"It all has grown out of his grandmother's

plans for settling him,' replied Isabel, with gravity. 'She has formed several, and a fatality has appeared to attend them all. First, in order to make up, in some degree, to Lord Devereux, for the disposition she intends to make of her property, she expressed her pleasure that Augustus should marry one of the Devereux girls, his cousins, of course. Augustus was so complaisant as to offer himself successively to them both. Amelia was the younger and prettier sister, and Augustus, who always has had a weakness for his cousins, addressed himself first to her. She refused him, most reluctantly, at the bidding of her mother, who thought herself sure of this great prize, and meant to secure it for the elder daughter, Carry. Carry was not pretty, but sensible, and really loved Augustus. She refused him because she would not be forced thus upon a man who preferred her sister. This affair was not very mortifying—it was but a family arrangement, which failed. Augustus consented to it because he thought it just, perhaps; and he regretted the way it terminated chiefly on account of Caroline Devereux, whose generosity he appreciated as it deserved. But after this, the old viscountess formed a project for her grandson, of which it is hard to say whether the result has wounded more the affections of Augustus Clifford or the pride of his family. If I tell you, Louise,' she added, 'it is as a profound secret.'

"Of course."

"It was Lady Blanche Courtenay, the daughter of Lord Excester, and niece of the witty Duchess of Lennox," said Isabel, 'whom old Lady Devereux hit upon as the fittest bride for her future heir. Lady Blanche was only sixteen, however, and her father would not allow such a thing even to be mentioned to her till her education should have been completed. So, Augustus was sent to travel for two years; but before leaving England, he saw Lady Blanche at the famous wedding of Lady Edith Stuart and Captain D'Eyncourt. Lady Blanche was a bridesmaid. The purest virgin rose, of spotless white, that ever was presented to a bride, could not be purer or sweeter, they say, than she. Augustus, with the most susceptible nature in the world, conceived the most violent passion from the mere sight of his intended. He kept her image in his heart during the two years of travel; he returned to England at their expiration, and repaired immediately to Wilderham, *s'innamora d'avantage*; won the young lady's affections; was all but engaged to her; encountered a religious scruple on her part, founded on his being a Roman Catholic; and really, from no other cause than his own delicacy, in refusing to employ the influence of her father and mother to decide her to yield to her own inclinations in his favor, actually saw her, almost in his presence, accept Lord Waterborough, for whom she had merely the *highest esteem*, and whom she soon after, and very hastily, married. The poor fellow has not been himself since. He shrinks from the mere idea of any new matrimonial scheme, or love affair of any kind. Knowing this, I am more forward with him than otherwise would be consistent with delicacy.'

"So I thought," I said, with simplicity.

"We look on all that has happened," pursued she, 'as Providential, to prevent his marrying a

Protestant. For these young men are regarded with interest by all the Catholics in England, as the future pillars of our holy cause. Augustus will be the head of another great Catholic family, inferior to none in blood, in rank, or in wealth. And Fred, from his personal qualities, is hardly less important. He possesses almost universal talents, and they say that his attainments are beyond belief for his age. From all I gather, he is looked upon as a second Admirable Crichton, who, by the by, was also a Catholic. But he is not the tractable personage that Augustus is. He has a mind and will of his own, I assure you, and—between ourselves—rules Lady Devereux completely. Augustus is but a guest at the castle which will one day be his own: Fred is its master, and interferes even in the management of the estates. His effrontery would be astonishing, were not his judgment so precocious. Jealous as she is of her authority, Lady Devereux knows the value of his advice. It is curious, for instance, how he comes to live at the castle. His nominal home is Clifford Grove, where he has his grandfather's library, and many other things. It is a fine old place on the banks of the Glenta, sheltered by hanging woods, and with the richest old-fashioned interior; quite a scholar's place, and every body says that Fred is that. It is to be his one of these days, and when there, as his father is always in London or Ireland, he is necessarily 'our young master.' Thus he has acquired that habit he has of deciding every thing, and having his own way. If Lady Devereux did not suffer him to be just as absolute at Glentworth as he is at Clifford Grove, he would soon leave her. Once, he did: they had a falling out about a year ago, and he was a month at the Grove without ever coming near the castle. But she was not easy till she had him back. He saves her so much trouble. She keeps open house all the year, and Fred has the art of society. When he was about fifteen, indeed, he was almost too great a favorite; more beautiful than any girl, and with a voice so delicious. In the private theatricals he always took female parts, or those of saucy young pages, such as girls play on the stage. How well I remember it!

"But no one can exactly make out Fred," said Isabel, after musing a while over these reminiscences. "With an exterior of the most winning frankness, and often boyish unreserve, he never really lets you into the secret of his thoughts. Now, his conduct last night," she continued, looking at me, "was very contrary to what we all thought we had a right to expect; but whether he was merely amusing himself by disconcerting all our plans, or had some ulterior purpose, is a perfect mystery."

"Meanwhile, Isabel gossiping with so much liveliness, we had penetrated deeply into the recesses of the wooded region lying between Glentworth and Lyston. Unaccustomed as I was to walking in a domain so extensive as even that of the latter mansion, I had scarcely taken notice when Isabel had opened a postern and passed through. Yet the character of the grounds had immediately changed. From stately avenues and smooth-shaven lawns, we entered a wilderness. The masses of mighty timber, sometimes rendered almost impassable by underwood, were broken by openings covered

with fern, out of which the deer often started away at our approach. Upon the whole, the ground had rather descended, although it was extremely undulating; and now, all at once, we emerged from a green and silent glade, where the solitude had sometimes inspired me with fear, and came upon the flowery bank of a deep and rapid river. Beyond it the ground ascended rapidly; and, crowning the wooded height, rose the gray keep of Glentworth, with the banner of its lady flying, really more than half a mile distant, but seemingly close at hand.

"Why, this is Glentworth, Isabel!"

"Certainly. We have been in the park for the last hour. We might wander here all day without being discovered. Let us sit a while. I am literally tired to death."

"She seated herself on the flowery green-sward, and I followed her example. Fine old trees, with tender young leaves, waved above us; the river rushed at our feet; the sunshine was pleasantly warm on the bank.

"That is the banner of the Beauchamps," said Lady Isabel, "that you see flying on the keep. Lady Devereux is the last of that great family. Her father inherited the titles and property from a cousin; but there were two baronies—Beauchamp de Glentworth and Mor-daunt—older than the earliest patents, which of course fell into abeyance between that cousin's sisters. Mrs. Clifford's father, Lady Devereux's second husband, was the only child of one of those sisters. It is one of Lady Devereux's objects, in which she is certain to succeed at last, to get those baronies called out of abeyance, in favor of her daughter, or directly, of Augustus. The thing has been on the point of being settled once or twice, and indeed, now that her friends are in power, it is thought very strange that she does not press it more decidedly. Augustus will be the twentieth Lord Beauchamp. What a position!"

"A light step sounded near us. We looked round, and saw Frederick Clifford, a fishing rod in his hand, and a basket slung at his waist.

"Is it your own position, or that of Made-moiselle de Belmont that you mean, Isabel? Both are graceful and interesting. One would almost think that you had expected to be taken by surprise."

"In saying this he threw himself on the turf, at a little distance from us."

CHAPTER VI.

"How is it you are not at your books this morning, sir?"

"He pulled a book from his pocket and handed it her.

"Unless I could do two things at once, how could I do all that I must every day? You don't understand the character, Isabel; you are holding the book upside down. That is seldom the case with me. I understand almost all sorts of character, and when I meet a volume written in a new one, I always set myself to study it till I make it out. Don't you approve my doing so, Miss de Belmont?"

"What sport have you had, Fred?"

"He took off his basket, and, rising on one knee, showed us its contents.

"A half-dozen trout. I had intended taking them to Lyston, as an offering to my fair cousin and her friend. Perhaps I shall now have the pleasure of their company on my way. I think we might complete the dozen, if I could call in the twentieth Lord Beauchamp, who is busy with his rod somewhere in the neighborhood."

"He whistled very loud a beautiful Irish air. Isabel blushed.

"Ought we not to go?" I said.

"Perhaps. But to tell you the truth, let my position be as graceful and interesting as Fred says, I find that rising would be awkward, and not at all interesting without his assistance."

"This was very true, and we both sate still, with a heightened color, as we perceived Augustus advancing slowly toward us. Frederick resumed his place at our feet with the greatest coolness possible. Augustus saluted us, without appearing to observe that we were embarrassed, and begged permission to follow his brother's example, placing himself at Isabel's side. Inquiries were made as to his sport. It had been better than his brother's. The manner of the latter changed the instant that Augustus appeared. His saucy boyish raillery was laid aside for a deference dashed with just enough familiarity to remind us that he had somehow a right to be on brotherly terms with us both. He directed his conversation chiefly to Isabel, and led her to talk of old times; of their playing together at Lyston and Glentworth; of the famous hiding-places in the great tower; of their moonlight walks in later years by the banks of the Glenta; of their singing. Augustus became interested; he talked with animation. He wished to hear one of the old songs. Fred mentioned one that he thought Isabel must remember. He began, and she soon joined him. It was a sort of ballad; a tale of chivalry; of a true knight misused by his mistress, and afterward consoled for her cruelty by a kinder fair. Isabel sang with feeling, and at the end burst into tears. I trembled lest this direct allusion to the cause of her cousin's melancholy should wound rather than console, and I dared not look at Augustus from the time that I perceived the drift of the song. Frederick sang with spirit and gayety, controlling a magnificent voice to favor Isabel's. There was a silence of some minutes, and then he asked me to sing. I resisted, and to my surprise, Augustus joined his entreaties to those of his brother. I turned to him as he addressed me, and perceived that he was looking really cheerful. I sang, of course, and, at the request of both brothers, an Italian song. This time Augustus praised me, and spoke of the purity and beauty of my Italian accent. Isabel mentioned that my father generally conversed with me in that language, and that the Signora Cavatini, our mistress of music, always said that I spoke like a Roman or a Siennese. Frederick gave me a look. Isabel proposed that they should assist us to rise, and we would return home together. We naturally broke into pairs.

"It is half ambition—half native kindness and real affection for Augustus," said Frederick to me, abruptly assuming what was the subject of my thoughts. "She mistakes his case entirely. He is not a man to be whining over a mis-marriage in love. Another has gathered the use he coveted, but there are more, as fresh

and fragrant, in the gardens of Shiraz, as my poet here would say. I am sure now, as if I had overheard it, that Isabel has been telling you this morning that all the Cliffords and De Coureys want to see her married to my brother, and that the whole Catholic connection participate in this wish."

"I assented."

"She is easily seen through. You, my dear Miss de Belmont, I do not yet so well understand," he added, with his brilliant smile. "It is a fair book, but written in a character as yet unknown."

"I fear, not worth taking the trouble to decipher, Mr. Clifford."

"On the contrary, I am enchanted to meet with a little mystery in real life, and the subject of that mystery! A beautiful girl of sixteen, of foreign birth, in that Italian style which is so striking to the imagination, speaking three languages with equal facility; singing like a syren, dancing like a sylph; frank, yet knowing how to baffle an impertinent curiosity; shy, on the other hand, to timidity, yet easily won to intimacy; with the modest, controlled demeanor of an English girl, and the quick susceptibility of sunnier climes."

"I blushed deeply as I replied—"I am afraid I have shown myself to you as only too susceptible,"—but no blushes could express my confusion at this address. He became instantly serious, but looked at me for some time with the bright, steady look I had first observed in him, before he replied.

"You have more reason to think my behavior insolent or base, than to look upon your own as weak. Let us not consider these things too curiously, my sweet friend. Believe me, my dear Miss de Belmont, there are infinite accords between human hearts, appreciable by those who have not suffered the senses to draw a veil between their hearts and themselves. To meditate on our involuntary sympathy, is to distort it; the rules of natural innocence will suffice for us both; at our age, happily, modesty and love are one, and both instinctive. Do you understand me, dear—Louise?"

"I think I feel your meaning."

"It is enough. Were I unworthy of your confidence, I should want the power to charm it from you. The severity with one's self by which alone such a power can be acquired, is the best security against its abuse. Let me now give you some proof of the genuineness of my friendship. I can give you some hints that may be of use to you in this little world of ours, which, at present, I perceive, seems to you great, because you are not accustomed to it."

"I feel lost in it, as I do in this park," I said.

"In this society every body's position is exactly ascertained, and an individual straying into it, of whom that can not be said, is worse off, in some points of view, than a Pariah. Now, that is your case. Who are you, in the name of all our ancestors, that you have presumed to come to Lyston Hall and Glentworth Castle, and walk in the old groves where they have made love for a thousand years? To come, too, to captivate the hearts of their heirs perhaps, and interfere with the settled policy of family pride? What can you expect but to be mortified every hour by bare toleration as long as you are permitted

to stay, and to be sent off in disgrace should you be so unfortunate as, in spite of your general unpopularity, to attract the favorable regards of the susceptible Augustus Clifford?"

"Oh, I hope not," I said, taking, between alarm and confidence in his protection, the arm he now offered me.

"Well," he continued, "the bare suspicion of such a thing with which I managed last night to terrify them all, has already made you of importance, and if you play your cards well, you may avail yourself of their very fears to become a general favorite."

"Oh, I can't fancy that possible," I said.

"It rests with yourself," he replied. "No one but you can baffle the timid and selfish tactics which they will employ against you; but, if you are true to yourself, I can assist you. Yes, smile at the reality, as you are now smiling at the report. You need not appear unaware of the negative rudeness with which at first you will be treated; that would do little credit to your penetration, and less to your sincerity; but do not be disconcerted by it. Reflect that their want of courage and generosity (for that is what it is) is a misfortune to themselves, and avail yourself of the annoyance to yourself, which of course you must feel, to acquire that self-control which is the true secret of influence over others. It is a school that you are in—the same as at the *pension*. This is a higher class—that's all. In the greater world where one day you will inevitably play your part (be not anxious on that score), you will perhaps have reason to thank our friends here for affording you this opportunity of becoming mistress of yourself. But on the other hand, if your vanity be irritated by finding that justice is not done you; if your pride be wounded by the slight neglects that women know how to inflict, and which few young female hearts can bear, you can not conceal it; and then, your situation in the midst of an unsympathizing and hostile, because consciously unkind circle, will be at least very unenviable. Forewarned is forearmed, my dear Miss de Belmont. I speak with candor, for I think I know you well enough already, to be sure that it is the way to your heart."

"Indeed it is!" My tears were flowing fast, though I was very happy. It reconciled me to the trials he predicted, to be so kindly counseled; and my woman's instinct of dependence twined itself at once round one who offered what I had always wanted—but of which I had never before perceived the want—guidance. It was the more winning, because neither Isabel's account of him, nor my own observation, had led me to expect any thing like that. Perhaps, had I considered what my friend had told me of his precocity of judgment, premature initiation into society, and the impenetrability of his character, I might have suspected that he was capable of assuming any line of conduct that he thought fit, to throw me off my guard, and effectually win my confidence; but it was not easy for a girl of sixteen, candid and inexperienced, to resist the appearance of earnest sincerity on one of the most prepossessing of human countenances; and I afterward found that I was not singular in yielding to the charm. Even those who knew Frederick best, who, when away from him spoke of the deep subtlety of his intellect and

confessed their inability to divine the real workings of his mind, if ever it suited him to make use of them, fell, just the same as others, into the snare, if indeed it was one, of his apparent ingenuousness. But I must not anticipate. You look so interested, dear Alice."

"I am," said Alice, who, by the rapid and delicate changes that passed over her visage of celestial beauty, discovered the fluctuations of intense feeling that accompanied every turn of her companion's narrative.

"Frederick Clifford," continued Madame de Schönberg, "asked me many questions about myself; not one of which seemed to have ever so remote a connection with my family, or worldly circumstances. My pursuits, my accomplishments, the books I had read, the opinions I had imbibed, the wishes I had formed for the future, he drew me on to talk of. By degrees, as I grew more familiar and got upon school anecdotes, I expanded as freely as if he had been one of my companions. All the while his bright eye interrogated mine, or his slight, winning smile, of careless yet affectionate sympathy, allured me into an unbounded frankness."

"There is one thing," he said, as we reached the gardens of Lyston Hall, "which I should mention, to relieve you beforehand from a disagreeable misapprehension. Do not suppose, if Augustus should seem rather distant with you, that he shares the feelings of these people. Your sex and your being our guest are enough for him. He is as knightly a Clifford as ever wore spurs; and if he were sure that you were a princess, as for aught we know you are, it would not add to your claims upon his courtesy. I was talking of you to him this morning, and regretting the unfavorable, and, all things considered, unjust, opinion you were likely to carry away of our family; and he interested himself in it warmly, I assure you. He said he would take care to mark his consideration for you. But I showed him that this would not do. Attention from him would render you the object of positive suspicion and jealousy, and so make your position worse instead of better. With me it is different. I am not a great prize like Augustus. Nobody here has any designs upon me; indeed, it is well known that they would be hopeless. You may captivate me, therefore, as much as you like, and the more you seem to be captivated with me even, the better they will like you. Nothing serious can come of it at present, and, as all agree that you are an heiress, it might some day be rather a good thing."

"Advice like Frederick Clifford's has been often given," pursued Madame de Schönberg, still addressing Lady Alice, "but seldom taken. I took it with simplicity, and followed it with anxious fidelity, sustained under some trials of considerable severity not only by my confidence in his wisdom as an adviser, but by the new delight of his watchful sympathy. The good effects of it became speedily apparent. Even Lady Mary Clifford, and Mary St. Aubyn, who naturally had betrayed more unequivocally, as they also could evince more disagreeably, a feeling which their seniors disguised, softened quite. Lord and Lady Mortmain were ever kind; Isabel always friendly, though she did not pour out her confidence quite so unreservedly

The brothers and ourselves were constantly together, either riding or walking in the beautiful and interminable grounds of the two parks. When it was seen that I enabled the two cousins to be together, without impropriety, I became really popular. We went to Glentworth, where I was presented, as I may call it, to Lady Devereux. We dined there, and the second week there was a grand ball at the Castle. Frederick did not conceal that it was on my account he had asked his grandmother to give it. Our attachment, as it was called, was spoken of as a thing settled, and, as I was known to be an heiress, and it was understood that he would have his own way, nobody dreamed of interfering. Indeed, it was generally approved, certain as all were that Fred would never be taken in, and that ample time would be afforded for the clearing up of the mystery in which my connections were involved.

"To comprehend exactly our real position, you must remember that Isabel had ever been to Augustus as a petted younger sister, accustomed in infancy to his knee and his arms. Her true plan would have been to treat him so that he might forget it; but she appeared to think, on the contrary, that this privileged familiarity, modified of course by the added years which had brought her to the threshold of womanhood, was her best card. I think that she was constitutionally too frank to keep to any course but that which her feelings made natural. And it was not even the ambition and worldliness of which she accused herself, so much as a girlish fear of being thought to fail where all her friends expected her success, that really prompted her present manœuvres. At all events, no one at Lyston or Glentworth took the trouble to watch either her behavior or mine, while the relationship of Isabel to the two brothers, and the extreme youth of Frederick and myself, were deemed to authorize many deviations from etiquette, the observance of which is more lax in Irish families. It was, therefore, by the rules, as Frederick said, of natural innocence, and the instincts of youthful modesty, that the intimacy which occurred, was controlled. I never thought, after the first explanation with Frederick, of distrusting either myself or him. Love, as I felt it for him, was a pleased dependence—a submission to his singular authority—in which I found the lull of all a girl's first restlessness. I ceased to have those dreams of youthful vanity in which what seemed to me deficient in my lot was supplied; and my actual real life, as it flowed on from day to day, filled up the horizon of my contented thoughts."

CHAPTER VII.

"It was the day but one before that appointed for my return to school, and, after dinner, Fred came to the windows of the drawing-room, and invited me to take a twilight walk on the terrace. The conversation turned on an incident of which I need not detail the nature, or the causes.

"How could you be so sure of your own mind," he said, "as to decide at once, irrevocably, on the proposal made you this morning?"

"I have heard such a bad character of Charley Devereux."

"But are you aware that he will have thirty thousand a year? I speak from personal knowledge of his father's affairs; and Lord Devereux can't live three years longer. Let me tell you such fruit is not shaken from every tree, nor into every lap. The proposal was so flattering, coming as it did from my uncle himself. It is true that I advised it in my grandmother's name, which was equivalent to a command; but it was really an opportunity to fix your position."

"If I marry for position, as Isabel says, it must be a really great position to tempt me," I said, with the air of comprehending very well that all this was only meant to try me.

"And what do you call a really great position?" he replied, looking at me with his gleaming eyes.

"To be mistress of Glentworth," I said.

"Do you think so?" he replied, in a rather peculiar tone. "Well, Louise, I give you credit for these motives in a refusal that I entirely approve, of course. But, in the minds of the people here, do you know, I pass for something in your refusal of my cousin?"

"Certainly, dear Fred. How should you not?"

"Were I to make a similar offer, then, you would accept?" said he, smiling.

"That's not a fair question," I said, but with a look of affection that answered it.

"He mused; once or twice seemed about to speak, but refrained. At last he said, 'I can partly return—inadequately, I admit—your flattering compliment. Were I to be offered tomorrow the hand of my royal cousin, the Princess Victoria, I should undoubtedly refuse, and the thought of my dear Louise would have a good deal to do with my heroism. But how silly would it be in us to forestall maturity, and rob ourselves of the delicious privilege of our youth—to love without fetters! Let us enjoy, dear Louise, while we can, the fragrant flower and blossom of affection, without troubling ourselves whether we shall one day gather its ripened fruit. Let those with whom it is the burning summer meditate the harvest; with us, it is the joyous and unreturning spring-time of our lives.'

"We were now in a *cul-de-sac* of the terrace. The moon—a slender crescent—hung over the keep of Glentworth; which lay westerly from Lyston. We heard the voices of Isabel and Augustus, approaching by one of the walks.

"Let us get away," said Frederick; "I want to talk to you."

"He sprang over the balustrade, lifted me over it, leaped down upon the turf of the lawn below, and made me trust myself to his arms. Then he suffered me to slip down by his side, and drew close to the terrace wall, where, without getting over the balustrade, no one from above could see us. Presently, his brother and Isabel came to the spot, the latter wondering where we could be. I clung to Fred as closely and trustfully as if he had been the brother that I had never known; and several times he kissed my forehead, calmly, indeed, but very tenderly. As soon as they were gone, he proposed to get into one of the avenues. His dog had been on the terrace, had jumped down after us, crouch-

ing under our feet while we were hiding, and now bounded away over the grass, as we advanced into the park. Fred carried me till we reached the walks, lest I should wet my slightly-shod feet with the dew. Ah, what happy days were those!" exclaimed Louise de Schönberg, "when I was innocent, and knew in affection only its watchful care! When he had set me down in the broad avenue, where we caught still the gleam of the sinking crescent over the woods on our left, he said—

"What I mentioned just now about the Princess Victoria would not be a bad idea, if Melbourne would only look at it in the right point of view. What do you think, Louise? Doesn't it strike you that I am just the person to be consort to the heiress presumptive?"

"I laughed.

"What we want," he continued, "is a national royalty, which was the real meaning of Jacobitism. This petty prejudice of the court, rather than of the royal family itself, against marrying subjects; forgetting that all our great and historical royal houses—the Plantagenets, the Tudors, the Stuarts—were originally subject, and intermarried perpetually with subjects. Their blood thus ennobled the aristocracy, and the infusion into the royal line counteracted the degenerating tendency that causes the decay of dynasties. The Plantagenets were vigorous to the last, and Elizabeth was as pure a Tudor as Henry of Richmond. When the hour of trial comes for the thrones of Europe, the consequence will be seen of having cretinized their occupants. What is the reason that some oriental dynasties seem never to wear out? The sovereigns marry beautiful slaves. What a line has been that of Othman! And Mahmoud, at this moment, is as fresh as Amurath or Soliman.

"We have had the Plantagenets, the Tudors, the Stuarts," he continued, after a moment's pause; "why not the Cliffords? We are as noble as any of those families were till they wedded the heiresses to the throne. As ancient as they, who were once our fellows, and, surviving them, our antiquity is greater by many centuries than theirs was. Augustus and I are, at this moment, the most nobly-descended Englishmen that exist, out of the royal family, and we will not cede even to them. As the Castilian nobles said, in subscribing allegiance to Philip V., 'I am as noble as the king,' or, rather, as the princess, since the question is now of her. In Wales, the Cliffords are princes; the De Courcys are a branch of a sovereign house on the continent; both my father and mother are descended from the Conqueror; my grandmother's lineal ancestor married a daughter of England; through my great-grandmother I am related to every reigning house in Europe, except that of Bernadotte. I am a kinsman of the princess herself, and not a remote one; we are barely out of the prohibited degrees. I am fifteen months her senior; our ages, therefore, are entirely suited."

"I have heard," said I, smiling, "that if the princess marries a Catholic she forfeits her right to the throne."

"The same authority that made that law can unmake it; and since our emancipation it is impossible that so insulting an exclusion can be

any longer maintained. That is a very trivial objection, my little Louise."

"We were opposite an old, very old oak, with centuries scored on its bark, but the gnarled strength of ages in its still green and spreading branches. It stood in the center of a vast lawn, and, by tradition, had existed in the time of the Beauchamps, earls of Warwick, when the whole of the Lyston Hall property formed part of the Glentworth demesnes. There was a swing attached to one of the main branches, where Isabel and myself were still children enough to like to amuse ourselves. Frederick now carried me to it, and, placing me in the swing by his side, continued his discourse.

"Here, Warwick," he said to his dog, taking the animal's ear in his beautiful hand, "see that no one approaches while thy master converses with this lady fair and sweet, under the Beauchamp oak. We are safe now," he added, as the dog lay immediately down, with his head to the ground. "I am going to make you the confidante of some thoughts of mine, Louise. I have observed that you know how to keep a secret, and I owe you something for your faithful and true-hearted behavior of to-day, and your sweet confession of to-night. Suppose, I say that I undertook to wed the heiress of the British Isles and their subject empires?"

"The first step, of course, would be to put myself in a different position from my present—the younger son of a country gentleman, however noble in descent or princely in estate, or even the younger brother of the twentieth Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth, as Isabel would say—I must be Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth, myself. Well, nothing easier than that. Augustus is only anxious to resign in my favor; it has required all my influence to prevent his taking a step that would bring it about of itself; and that is turning Benedictine. Yes, he meditates the cloister—for which he has no vocation, solely to rid himself of a position which a truer abnegation, perhaps—but that is neither here nor there. As for Lady Devereux, she wishes daily that I were the elder brother. She would accept the substitution with pleasure. And as for the baronies; it is equally within the royal prerogative to determine the abeyance in my favor or in that of Augustus; and it may be done whenever my grandmother likes. If it were a question of Frederick, instead of Augustus Clifford, before yonder moon, which is sinking behind the western tower of the castle, has filled those horns which don't hold water, there would be another Lord Beauchamp and Mordaunt on the roll of the peerage. I repeat it: it rests with me to be a peer of the realm, and the acknowledged heir of Glentworth, before this month of May is ten days older. But do you think I would stop there?"

"What has been done for the Smithsons and Grenvilles, may well, I think, be done for the Cliffords; and Beauchamp will hardly be thought less than Percy—is greater than Chandos. Lady Devereux should be created Duchess of Beauchamp, to which all the other titles enjoyed by her father should be added, with remainder to myself, and I might be made Marquis of St. Davids during her life. It was the title of the heir of the former dukes. Melbourne should do it. I know him, and every Whig of importance. Lady

—, whose influence is greater than that of any other woman in a party upheld by social influence, dislikes my grandmother, but would do any thing for me; the women, indeed, would all be my allies; and if any other difficulty could occur, as from the secret but undoubted disaffection of the court, the king and Lady Devereux, though they have not met for years, are personal friends.'

"We were now careering through the air at a famous rate; one moment so nearly on a level with the lofty branch from which we were suspended, that the lines slackened into a curve; another, sweeping down with the velocity of lightning, to rise as instantly to the same height on the opposite side. Frederick kept us in motion by what seemed a slight effort of his body. Each of us held on to the swing-rope with a hand, and each had an arm round the waist of the other. It was getting darker, though it was keen starlight. As we rose in the air, I ever caught for an instant a glimpse of his countenance. It showed no signs of excitement. It was a still night; the soft fluttering of my garments, as we swept through the air, the only sound except his voice.

"Suppose me, then, he continued, 'a duke, or, what amounts to the same thing; young, rich, powerful; with personal qualities equal to the position; among which, that of personal beauty must not be forgotten; for it would be mere affectation in me to pretend not to be aware that it is one which I possess in a remarkable degree. In this case, it would be an important element of success, for the two indispensable points to be gained are the preference of a woman and the plausible verdict of the multitude. Finally, all the requisites being thus assembled in me, it remains only to consider the character of the princess, to whom I have already the advantage of being known; and I have had occasion to observe that she possesses a disposition that would lead her to identify herself more easily with the national tendencies of her country than with the feeble traditions of the House of Hanover, not to mention other traits, seldom wanting in a character of native strength, which, if not allowed to waste themselves in premature action, are precisely such as are required, in the critical moment on which all depends, to break through the opposition of the feeble, and overpower the *vis inertiae* of the dull.'

"Really," exclaimed Alice, "this Frederick Clifford of yours seems to have been a very singular personage."

"Was he not? He went on to tell me things that I do not feel at liberty to repeat, even at this interval, and to you in confidence. Then he proceeded, assuming all these results as obtained, to draw a magnificent picture of the truly national, yet imperial and Catholic system that he would introduce. 'It takes a Norman to govern England,' he concluded: 'it always did.'

"But why," I exclaimed, in the excitement of sympathetic ambition, 'why *don't* you do this?'

"He let the swing die away, and then, taking me up once more, carried me back to the avenue. Warwick slowly preceded us, carefully nosing the ground.

"The Princess Victoria of Kent,' he said, 'my cousin and future sovereign, is, it is true, a pretty, interesting girl, of about your age, Louise. I should say she had character. But I have seen the loveliest women in Europe, dear Louise, with indifference, and if the candor of sixteen could attract me more (as it ought) than the matured charms which I could not wisely or innocently covet, I should find it in *you*, in its most winning shape, as I intimated to you to-night. The ambitious exaltation, therefore, which the thought of Victoria's destiny inspires, could never be mistaken by me for love; and, putting aside the disloyalty of the very idea in this case, to woo or wed any one except for love, is a profanation of sentiment—a forfeiture of personal dignity—a cruel deception.'

"Yes," said I, feeling a little ashamed.

"Then, although the first indispensable steps I have indicated are entirely feasible," he continued; 'and perhaps I should do no real injury to Augustus were I to carry that part of my project into execution; I should do a great injury to myself even to dally with the thought of supplanting my brother in his inheritance. I would not have so ungenerous a wish, for the crown of the universe. And these considerations aside—the results of which I have spoken are certainly within the limits of human attainment, and I can not discover what should prevent my realizing them, as things far more wonderful have been done by men who united genius and a soul of daring; yet it is something which no man has a right to do, to step out of the sphere that Providence has assigned him, and carve out a revolutionary and conquering career for himself. When Heaven has a great work to achieve, such as this would be, it prepares its instruments in secret, and calls them to their work. My present position in life seems to afford a slender scope for those talents of which I can not but be conscious; but if their bestowal be any thing more than an instance of that divine prodigality and wise excess by which nature provides against a possible deficiency—if the occasion arrive, I mean, for which such powers are needful—then my course will be a mission. Cromwell, who had a mission, if ever man had, never drew a sword till he was forty. At seventeen, I may well need the discipline of waiting for a call from on high.'

Alice hid her face.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHEN Fred has you to himself all day, if he likes, Miss de Belmont, it is unreasonable and unfair in him to monopolize your evenings," said Lord St. Aubyn; and every body else smiled, as we re-entered the drawing-room.

Lord Mortmain said that, for his part, he thought it very natural. He remembered when he liked a moonlight ramble himself, which, considering the age of the moon, and that it had been down at least three quarters of an hour, was a charitable interpretation of our absence. In short, it was considered that we had had an explanation. Every body, indeed, knew that it was useless to scrutinize Fred's physiognomy; but my slight blush, and pleased, though down

cast look, evinced that gentle excitement of gratified tenderness which I really felt.

"The next day was to have been the last of my stay, but in the morning came an invitation from Lady Devereux, for Isabel and myself to pass a week at Glentworth 'before the departure of her young friend.' Every body said it must not be refused, and Lady Mortmain herself undertook to write to my father that she had ventured to overrule my going at the time appointed. In the mean time, the brothers had come with pony carriages from the castle, and were to drive us to see a ruined abbey ten miles distant, which Lord —— and Lord Mortmain talked of restoring.

"On this occasion, I confided to Frederick all that I knew about myself without reserve. It amounted to little more than this; that I was not a legitimate child, and that my mother's subsequent marriage with another had rendered a reparation, as well to me as to her, no longer possible. He seemed so pained by this—so very reluctant to admit that my impressions were correct. The hypothesis he had framed upon the facts elicited by my first cross-examination by the ladies, was quite different. A separation, he said, had occurred between my parents—a separation *de biens*, and a division of the children. Both the latter being girls, my father had taken the elder. Hence my father spoke of me as an only child, who would inherit all his fortune. In that point of view, I was so. Were my parents married? Doubtless, or else my father, whom Isabel described as both young and strikingly handsome, would be looking forward to marriage for himself, and would not say that his property must devolve upon me at his death. That such were his views—which the education, the gifts, and costly care lavished upon me proved—made it clear that he was precluded from marrying by the existence of an indissoluble bond. This ingenious reasoning satisfied every body.

"'It was good,' he now said, 'but it failed in assuming, as all reasoning must, that your father was acted on by the usual motives of mankind. At present, it is evident that he is not. A man in the flower of his age, the handsomest man Isabel 'ever saw,' with a very large fortune, lives in complete retirement, and brings up an illegitimate daughter as his heiress. He is evidently acting upon a plan with reference to you, and one different from any which, generally speaking, men in his apparent situation would entertain. I infer that his own position is exceptional. He tells you that your and his family is illustrious. Where, then, are his relatives? He speaks French with purity, you say, but has an accent; English with fluency, but avoids it; and prefers Italian to either. Why does he avoid English? Does he perhaps speak it with a *brogue*?'"

"Really," I said, "now you ask, I think he does; and he uses Irish turns of expression. But I am prying into my father's secrets now—is that right?"

"'De Belmont—' mused Frederick. 'Irish—the natural son of some Irishman of rank by an Italian mother. How old is your father?'

"'He will be thirty-nine in June.'

"'Born in 1796, then,' he said, musingly.

"'Annunziata—Roma, 1795!' I exclaimed.

"'What does that mean?' he demanded, with surprise.

"I told him about the picture, and Isabel's story. I was very much excited.

"'This may be merely a coincidence,' said Frederick calmly, 'but it is an extraordinary one.'

"We arrived at the ruined abbey. Portions of the cloisters and the church were still standing. The choir was nearly perfect, though grass and delicate wild flowers grew between the stones of its pavement, mosses clung in niches once filled with the statues of saints, and the air of May breathed freely through the flowing tracery of the great east window, where many a sacred form had once glowed against the sky. This abbey was founded by a Lord Clifford, whose worn tombstone, formerly covered with sepulchral brass, was still to be seen in the chancel. Lord Mortmain was looking at this tomb when we entered the ancient sanctuary: Lord —— and Lady Mary Clifford were kneeling before the last and broken step which alone remained of what had been the altar. We all followed their example during a few minutes. When I rose, Frederick had joined Lord Mortmain. I went to them, and, as I drew near, heard Lord Mortmain say—

"'His name was Belmont. He quitted Ireland suddenly, after your uncle's death, and I have not heard of him since. But you must not ask me any more questions, because I am not at liberty to answer them.'

"'We are seven of us at Lord Clifford's tomb,' said Mary Clifford; 'and all his descendants. That portends something.'

"'Is Miss de Belmont one of Lord Clifford's descendants?' inquired her father.

"'She may be considered one of the family at present,' said Isabel, 'mayn't she, Fred?'

"'Assuredly.'

"'But I meant, of his blood,' said Lady Mary. 'I was thinking, for the moment, that she was a Clifford.'

"Driving home, Frederick was abstracted. I feared that the discovery of this double illegitimacy, though coupled with that of my participation in his own blood, would affect his regard for me. Timidly I expressed myself to this effect.

"'Our house,' he said, 'in the person of one who was its representative, has inflicted a profound injury on beings whom you now represent; and in your person we ought, if we can, to repair it: not for justice and humanity's sake alone, but for our own, to avert the judgments which surely, though often unobserved, sap the prosperity of families. Could Augustus be permitted to enjoy his inheritance in peace, while such a debt remained uncanceled? My grandmother thinks that he is unlucky; but the eye that is sufficiently clear to discern the spiritual causes of events,' added Frederick, turning to me in his usual quiet manner, 'perceives no casualties. I see standing by our hearth the inexorable Nemesis.'

"I have little to relate of our week at Glentworth, whither we went the same evening, except that there I saw much less of Fred, and much more of Augustus. It was a very different place from Lyston. The household was numerous: I do not mean servants, but persons

of good family, who, in various capacities, resided permanently at the castle and relieved its mistress of all that was onerous in her unceasing hospitality. The guests, too, were many in number, in spite of the season; some were country friends; some, people of fashion going up to London, and taking Glentworth on their way. The *tête-à-tête* system of Lyston was demolished; the moonlight walks were abandoned. Only, late in the evening, when the circle broke up, Isabel and myself, with our friends and cousins, descended to the terrace, or mounted to the ramparts, to enjoy an hour's conversation, and the view of the beautiful and dimly-illuminated country, the Glenta flashing at intervals through the silvered woods. In the morning, we had social rides, or drives; and I was generally selected for the vacant back seat in Lady Devereux's carriage; which, besides the honor, was pleasant and profitable; for on such occasions she would pay you for your company by a fascinating graciousness, and a flow of that anecdotal conversation which is so charming to the young. The dinner was sumptuous. Lady Devereux herself was abstemious, and a water drinker; but she knew that an exquisite table was an infallible method to fill her house with guests. A fine band attended on the terrace or in the hall, and played at intervals during the banquet. Lady Devereux affected a sort of regal state. Prayers were most punctually read in the chapel, by Frederick's Oxford tutor, night and morning, but few attended them; Isabel and I, of course, never did, nor either of the Cliffords. Dancing, music, and cards, filled up the evening.

"On the last day of the destined week of our stay, on entering the drawing-room before dinner, I perceived Lord Mortmain. I went up to him with animation. He kissed me on both cheeks, and, turning to a middle aged man of distinguished mien, with whom he had been conversing, presented me to Frederick's father. I courtesied profoundly, and felt my cheek suffused with a guilty glow, as if I were going to be called to account.

"It appears, Miss de Belmont," said Mr. Clifford, "that Lord Mortmain and myself may claim you as our niece."

"It was a letter from Lady Mortmain, informing her brother of the attachment his younger son appeared to have formed for a young lady of foreign birth, who was their guest, which brought Mr. Clifford to —shire. The letter had inclosed my father's address; for, as I was reputed to be an heiress, and it appeared that my affections were engaged by Fred, and that I had apparently given him a promise, it concerned the honor of the family, and Lady Mortmain's, to whose care I had been temporarily intrusted, that my father should be informed of what had taken place. Mr. Clifford, who happened to know who the Mr. de Belmont was that had bought the villa which had belonged to the late Marquis of Wessex, one of whose executors he had himself been, came down in great haste to put an immediate stop to any preposterous affair of this sort. It was Belmont, his brother De Courcy's late agent, whose father had been lessee of the Wessex property, and once his brother's valet, he believed; and his mother some low Italian woman. The man was rich beyond a doubt, and gentlemanlike enough; but

such a connection was out of the question for any Clifford. Lord Mortmain, however, to whom he first indignantly addressed himself, could present some considerations calculated to modify these first impressions.

"Lord Mortmain had been in Italy with their brother De Courcy; he knew the history of Annunziata. He entertained not a doubt, nor had De Courcy, for many years before his death entertained any, that the young Belmont (so called) was son of the latter. But for De Courcy's paralysis, which incapacitated him, by the partial overthrow of his mental powers, for making a valid will, he would have carried out his reparation to this son, deprived of his father's name, recognition and care, by leaving him Castle De Courcy. This would have been to repair one injustice by another, perhaps; but De Courcy intended it, and since their grandfather had not revived the entail, his legal right was unquestionable.

"Rather hard," said Mr. Clifford. "But who is this young lady's mother?"

"Her father can best tell that," said Mortmain. "But pious and careful, and of thoroughly gentle breeding—to judge by the little Louise herself—she must certainly be. The fault of the separation must as certainly be on Belmont's part; particularly as the other child it seems, is left with her."

"She is a very good girl, is she?" said Mr. Clifford.

"And a singularly accomplished one," said Lord Mortmain. "And her unhesitating refusal of Devereux's son, quite on Fred's account, no doubt shows a disinterestedness which it is impossible not to respect."

"She seems quite a paragon."

"No, not that," said Lord Mortmain, "but a nice little girl, and a very good one, and a prodigious favorite with all of us."

"This partial account prepared Mr. Clifford to be interested by my youthful appearance, the deep, graceful obeisance with which I greeted him, and my blushes. In short, he was pleased. When he learned from Fred that no positive engagement existed between us, his satisfaction was complete. He opened a communication with my father. Young as we both were, definite explanations on the points which seemed mysterious were deferred; but Mr. Clifford had a dislike for boarding-schools, so it was settled that I should leave the *pension* immediately, and reside alternately at home and with some of my new-found relatives. Fred, whom it was strange to see treated by his father as a boy, was sent to the continent with his tutor, to read at a German university."

CHAPTER IX.

"I DID not meet either of the brothers again till Christmas of the following year," continued Louise de Schönberg. "I was at Glentworth for the holidays, with my father; and I arrived before they did. One day, I was coming down to dinner with my father—in full evening toilet, for the castle was overflowing with guests. We descended the stairs rather slowly, I remember, for he had been hurt in hunting the day before. I have never described to you my father, but you

can easily picture to yourself a pale classic face, rich black hair, a melancholy Roman eye, narrow penciled eyebrows—the Italian traits of Annunziata engrafted upon the Phidian lineaments of the De Courcys. His figure was superb; his dress, usually, rich and juvenile; he hardly looked thirty-five; and, as we loitered on a landing-place and several persons passed us, I could not help thinking that I should be taken rather for his wife than daughter. Presently passed a young man, who, as he bowed apologetically, threw upon us both a glance of quiet scrutiny, and then descended the stair. It was Frederick, perfectly unchanged. I had not time for an exclamation. He had not recognized me.

“When we got to the drawing-room, I went directly to a mirror, and tried to remember how I had looked eighteen months before. True it was that my then girlish figure had developed into womanhood; I had gained my full height; my hair, which used to curl in my neck, and float on my shoulders, like yours, was now braided, and fastened at the back of the head, that evening, with a diamond arrow.

“Miss de Belmont shows equal taste and honesty in turning her back on the rest of the saloon, to admire its greatest ornament,” whispered a voice near me.

“Ah, Lord Maltravers,” I said, turning to the old beau, my ally and great admirer, “do you think I could ever have been better-looking than at present?”

“Never. Be tranquil, my dear child,” he replied, in the language he generally affected with me.

“I advanced with him into the interior of the great saloon, now rapidly filling. The two brothers were standing near each other. Fred was surrounded by old friends of both sexes, who expressed their astonishment at his being so perfectly unchanged. The pretty and witty Countess O’Shane declared that he must have discovered the *elixir vite* at his German University. ‘Unchanged indeed!’ I thought, ‘why, he is hardly more than a boy!’ I confess I blushed at the idea of passing for the *fiancée* of such a youth. I turned aside and retreated among a bevy of damsels. Lord Maltravers followed, and several other cavaliers.

“You see me just arrived from Paris, Miss de Belmont,” said Count F. “and I can give you an exact account how many of your unhappy admirers have committed suicide since your flight at Easter.”

“Her hard hearted behavior subsequently in London, proves how little concern the intelligence will cause her,” said a candidate for matrimony from St. James’s-street.

“It was not till dinner was announced, and I had taken the arm of one of these brilliant cavaliers, that I caught Fred’s eye. He advanced immediately, though with something less than his old tranquil superiority of manner. His voice even trembled a little.

“‘It is natural enough that I should not have recognized you, Louise,’ he said; ‘but impossible that you have forgotten me.’

“At table, I found myself next Augustus. Neither did he recognize me. I laid my hand on his arm: ‘Do you, too, find me so altered, Augustus?’

“‘Louise!’ He turned quite pale. I gave him my hand, with a smile. He did not for some time regain his composure.

“‘Even Fred didn’t know me,’ I said.

“Eighteen months had developed my mind as much as my person—and with reason. Had I not spent a winter in Paris, where introductions from the Cliffords secured us at once an *entrée* into the choicest society? and a season in London, where, under Mrs. Clifford’s roof, as an heiress and her niece, probably her future daughter-in-law, I could hardly fail of success?—a hateful word—I had not enjoyed either too much. In Paris, the thought of my mother, whom all our researches failed to trace, haunted me like a reproach of conscience. In London I missed the *agrémens* of Parisian society; and I was always drawing other comparisons not very favorable to those for whose suffrages I might otherwise have been anxious. The heroes of May Fair seemed to me rather insipid, after Frederick; and before the feudal vision of Glentworth and its vast domains, coronet and rent-roll seemed to pall. This indifference, where youth generally is the victim of blissful illusion, had not contributed, as I say, to my happiness, but it had rapidly matured my intelligence and my manners.

“‘Yes, it is over,’ said Frederick Clifford, as, at the end of the evening, which had passed in dance and song, we at last were left on a sofa together. ‘It is hard to resign any power; but if I wished to retain mine over you, dear Louise, I should be obliged to descend into the lover—to speak the language of passion, to solicit a heart, which, much as I prized it always, never contained for me any exciting mystery. Could you even imagine me thus at your feet? You recoil at being separated from me? That is natural. All the preparatory states of being—all the chrysalis affections that envelop, in the first instance, the heart—are thrown off with pain and reluctance. But when you know—as soon you will—what it is to be the blessing and reward of the more ardent sentiment you are so fitted to inspire, you will cease to regret the time when fraternal affection satisfied you. That affection in me, Louise, is as unchanged as every thing else is since we parted; and soon you may become as near to me in visible bonds as you have hitherto been in those which unite only one soul to another. You are too clear-sighted, now, not to have made already the same discovery.’

“Thus saying, he rose from my side, affectionately pressed my hand, and left me. I had to escape from the room to avoid being observed in tears, and it was several days before I recovered sufficient command of myself to reappear in public. But, every night, accompanied by my father, I walked on the terrace or in the gallery, where we were joined by both the brothers.”

At this part of her friend’s recital, Alice showed her emotion by some quiet tears, soft blushes, a look of interest and happiness, and the gentle heaving of her snowy bust. The countess proceeded with animation in her narrative.

“I have something to tell you, now, about a person who will interest you more, Lady Alice, than the unknown characters I have as yet de-

scribed; and that is your brother. Lord Stratherne was at Glentworth, with his friend, the Marquis of Wessex. The sister of the latter, whom your brother was believed to be on the point of leading, as they say, to the altar, was there also, with her mother. But Lord Stratherne was a sad inconstant if this was the case, which I don't believe. Isabel Fitzgerald, too, was at the castle, as a bride of three months. She had married Charles Devereux, on the principle of 'a bird in the hand,' I believe. The quiet departure of Augustus to the continent with Fred, apparently without a suspicion that any other than cousinly regrets followed him, had dashed to the ground all the hopes built on her exquisite beauty and many captivating qualities; and, at the end of the last season, she had accepted the best *parti* that offered. For my part, I knew that my father's consols would be as attractive a second season as the first, but I don't think that, if I had been ever so poor, and ever so worldly, that I should have acted so.

"Private theatricals were a regular Christmas amusement at Glentworth. There was a perfect theater. No expense had been spared for scenery and properties. We had a strong company. Lord Wessex was a good actor; Isabel, a delightful actress, especially in the saucy parts; and, in the character of Beatrice, she made a conquest of both the young marquises. But we had planned, for our great effort, an opera, in which the two principal parts were to be sustained by Frederick and myself. If Fred had a weakness, I think it was that of liking to grapple with great difficulties.

"It was to be the Marble Bride—then a novelty. The music was easy, and adapted to the popular taste; the supernatural has always attractions. Fred wrote a new libretto; transposed the music, where it was necessary, for our voices; and undertook to train the choruses. There was nothing, indeed, that he could not do. Lady Devereux's band made a capital orchestra, in which several enthusiastic amateurs enrolled themselves. The rehearsals—the best part—were endless.

"Fred, of course, was Zampa, and, with false mustaches, looked a very fierce one. I was, of course, Camilla. Charles Devereux was the lover—an insignificant part. Isabel was the soubrette. We were at a loss for the basso, Daniel; but Lord Stratherne, who had a voice like a young Lablache, was passionately fond of music, and, like all your family, skilled in it, undertook the part. It went off well. Charley Devereux broke down in the first act, but the melody to Bianca saved it and was encored. Then, the drinking-chorus of the Corsairs was really artist-like; but Fred, enacting all the technical passion and vain *fioriture* of a professional tenor with sarcastic fidelity, was magnificent throughout. It was in the last scene, in the nuptial chamber, when Zampa will drag Camilla, resisting and imploring, to the bridal bed, where the fatal Bianca awaits him, that his rendering of the drama first became, very suddenly and very startlingly, real. The determination of one urged on by an irresistible fate, sparkled in his dilated eyes. The might of a retributive law—the grand idea of this otherwise feeble production—was terribly present through

his every accent and movement. I remember, to this day, catching a glimpse of Lord Wessex in the circle, with all Frederick's expression perfectly reflected, for the moment, on his pale features. I also received great credit for my acting, especially for my start of repugnance, when, becoming conscious, I first pushed away the abhorred bridegroom. In truth, I deserved little; I really shuddered in those arms that so often, in former days, had encircled my slight, girlish form, in a gentle, fraternal caress; and when, at the awful moment, Zampa, having extinguished the lights, followed me into the curtained alcove, to seize, at the foot of the bed, the cold hand of the marble bride, and sink with her to the grave—her bridal couch—whither he had so rashly promised to follow, I exulted as at a real deliverance.

"One of the physical accomplishments that my father possessed in an eminent degree, and which, in my school vacations, when I was yet a very little girl, he had taken immense pains to impart to me, was that of dancing, for which I had a predisposition. There was no *tour de force* whatever, that he could not execute; and, as he had a fixed idea of developing the body, I dare say that if my school terms had not suspended his lessons, he would have educated my young limbs into the deformity of a dancer. Fred said that this insistence on physical education was perhaps a little heathenish, and he contrasted it with the Christian tradition of subjugating the body by the ascetic discipline; but nevertheless, he determined to avail himself of powers which scarcely any one knew that I accidentally possessed, to exemplify some ideas of his own on ideal dancing. He had planned, therefore, for this evening, an entertainment, which was to be the most perfect *coup* of all, or the most miserable failure. The audience were skillfully detained by refreshments, with which were distributed bills, announcing a ballet—*Ondine*—to be performed by personages with fanciful names. There was a general feeling that the thing was going now to be painfully ridiculous.

"Will the fair performer, whoever she may be, appear in the conventional costume of the ballet? *ça serait fort piquant, au moins*," said Count F. to Lord Maltravers.

"The curtain rose, and there was a faint murmur of approbation at the illusion of the scene, painted in Paris expressly for the occasion, and which Fred had long meditated. It was the sea-coast of southern Italy, by an early morning light: the purplish mountains, the blue sea, the fisher's gray cottage. Fred issued from it, in a costume which threw back the time to the age of the Odyssey, and the prime of Magnæ Græcia. His extreme beauty gave a probability the want of which is often felt. Such a form might well have charmed an *Ondine* from the waves. He cast his nets with a lounging grace, and lay down to finish his broken slumbers. It began to be thought that dancing would not be attempted; only a *tableau*. All felt interested. His classic *pose* in sleep was a study for a sculptor.

"How well I remember the soft, but deep and Dorian harmony, so simple, so grand, which accompanied the rising of the magical *Ondine* in her illumined shell. The first posture was

destined to prove at once a conception of ideal grace, and disciplined force to sustain it. The applause was overpowering. The classic robe of *Ondine*, radiant and flowing, showed that something very different from the feats of modern choreography was contemplated, yet which might not prove less wonderful. Fred had calculated it that every new movement should take the spectators by surprise; now and then was interposed a shower of sparkling steps, or a movement of freedom and daring grandeur, to heighten by contrast the dreamy fascination of floating attitudes and slow, magical gestures, in which the mere muscular power of the lower limbs served, unobtrusively, the superior expressiveness of the arms, and of the form, which the antique elegance of *Ondine's* shining drapery, delineated with light in every change of attitude. There was not too much of it; the first, half-pantomimic scene, a torchlight spectacle of Pagan worship; a shadow-dance by *Ondine*, which was voted miraculous. Fred's calculations had not deceived him; one breath of wonder filled the society of Glentworth.

"What you have all said," said Frederick, summing up, with a smile, the compliments showered upon us, 'amounts to this: that the union of apparently perfect liberty with the restraint of flowing robes, is a greater achievement than the most wonderful pirouetting. It is true. The surprises of the modern school are as vulgar as possible. To make the body the vehicle of a sublime lyrical poetry is something in another kind, my dear Count F. Gesture is, perhaps, the language of some superior beings; the idea, at any rate, is majestic. To speak without words is the unconscious wish of love, Stratherne; and what love aspires to, and art partially realizes, is, we know, a prophecy of what, in some stage of infinite progress, we are to attain.'

"Such was the way in which Fred sometimes threw himself out; quite fearless of incurring the imputation of pedantry when he had an object to gain, as in this instance he certainly had. The conviction had gradually stolen upon my mind that the society at Glentworth, externally decorous, was tolerant of a great deal of corruption. I was made seriously uneasy by the admiration of Lord Wessex and Lord Stratherne for Isabel—the most beautiful woman in the house, beyond question. Her husband was only vain of it. The rivalry of the two young men for her good graces prevented the discreditable appearance of flirting with either; but what I saw, with regret, was that Bella herself had a decided preference between them. In the rehearsals for the opera, in which the marquis had no part, the intimacy with your brother became more decided, and was favored by their having a scene together and a duet.

"One day (it was one of the last rehearsals), I observed that, from the first, Fred was resolved to tease Isabel. He began by pointing out certain trifling mistakes in her first song. Next, he stopped the music, on account of her being out in the quartette, and lastly, after the scene in which she sang with Lord Stratherne, in which she had particularly exerted herself, and with great success, giving to admiration the gay coquetry of Ritta, he went on most provokingly to criticise her performance. Even I felt a move-

ment of disappointment and impatience to hear him—while we all were praising her, coolly point out faults that we could not deny were faults, and then proceed to show, in a burlesque way, how she ought to have acted or sung; till Isabel, for some time hardly able to keep her temper, seeing Lord Stratherne smile, for nothing could be better-natured than Fred's manner, suddenly burst into tears, snatched the music out of his hands, and tore it in two in a passion.

"I shall never forget your brother's look. He was disenchanted in a moment, and soon after, talking with me, whom Fred always criticised as that day only he had criticised Isabel, praised significantly the sweetness of my temper. But I must not forget to state what effect our opera and ballet had on Augustus Clifford.

"I was still supposed to be affianced to Frederick, and it was somewhat difficult to remove this impression, because it had never been well-founded, and we had always denied its truth. Why Fred did not undeceive Augustus, I know not. For my part, I did not say any thing to the latter on the subject, because I was so aware of the feelings with which he would receive such an announcement. On the night of our felicitous representations, at the hour of retiring, Isabel and I invited the two brothers to go on the ramparts, as in old times. This was declared imprudent, so we went, instead, to the library, where the atmosphere was delicious. Fred and Isabel had their quarrel to make up, and retired into one of the deeply-recessed windows, admitting the clear moonlight, and Augustus and myself, to leave them together, went into another. It was the hour, and the situation, to sweep away a lover's reserve. He abruptly acknowledged a passionate regard for me, but before I could explain to him that he need not therefore fly from me, as he declared he must, Isabel interrupted us. The next morning he was gone, before I had risen: and my only resource was to tell Fred what had passed. He could not follow Augustus, but dispatched a servant on his traces with a letter.

"After this, the party, generally, broke up. Lord Wessex, to Isabel's extreme indignation, followed her and her husband to Paris. Lord Stratherne remained a fortnight longer at Glentworth, during which he and Fred were inseparable. Then Lady Wessex took flight, leaving a Parthian arrow for your brother and for me, in the shape of the story of Lucille, which you may suppose she had not forgotten. She told it him privately, and he came with it to me. It was from him, therefore, that I first learned that my mother had been a *femme-de-chambre*, and was married to a retired butler. The day after, he fled too, and then every body went. Soon, my father and I were the only guests. Lady Devereux would not hear of our going till Augustus returned; who, however, did not appear, and the time appointed for Frederick's departure drew near.

"He had determined, with his father's consent, on a very extensive plan of travel. France and Italy he had visited as a boy, if he ever really was one. His late absence of eighteen months had been wholly in Germany. He was now going to visit, successively, Russia, the East, Polynesia, and the Americas, and to be absent four years.

"The last night that he spent at Glentworth, after asking his grandmother's blessing, he led me away to the library, observing that we had much to say to each other. It was long after the family had retired to rest, before I could suffer him to say farewell. He promised to write to me till he had quitted Europe. He urged me, again and again, to let no feelings of delicacy in regard to Lady Devereux, or his brother's expectations, interfere with our union. The dispensations, he told me, to my great surprise, had already been demanded, would certainly be granted, and be deposited with the confessor of Augustus. At last, he invoked for me the protection of God, in a fervent prayer, and embraced me with tenderness as his sister by anticipation. By the earliest light of the next morning I saw, from my window, his carriage pass along the foot of the terrace, and I have never seen Frederick since."

CHAPTER X.

"My heart fails me when I think of what I have yet to tell."

"I know Frederick Clifford."

"You know him! Is he returned to Europe? Where did you meet him? You know him?—He loves you, Alice!"

"I have not met him more than three or four times, in all."

"It is enough—more than enough! Your silence up to this point is a tell-tale. I have observed your emotion—more than the pathos of my story could account for. I will tell you the rest now without fear."

Louise, nevertheless, wept, and hid her face before she resumed.

"My father's plan, from the very first, had been, to be restored, in me, to the name and inheritance of his fathers, by my marriage with one of my cousins, but preferably with the elder. To have a daughter of my age, who promised to have no slight share of beauty and accomplishments, if duly cultivated, suggested such a plan of itself. He had acted on it, and circumstances had assisted him beyond his hopes. Had he been contented with the fulfillment of it, so much was now within his power. Augustus loved me. Mr. Clifford declared that he would not refuse to one son the consent he had virtually given to another; Mrs. Clifford wrote me the kindest letter of congratulation, assumed the affair as settled, and invited me to come to them in the Green Park, as soon as they arrived in town. But Lady Devereux, with many expressions of regret and esteem for me, refused her consent absolutely, and not only declared that she would disinherit Fred as well as Augustus if the latter married without it, but she really intended to fulfill the threat. All this Fred himself had been well aware of, and yet, from the confines of Syria, the last of his letters reiterated the advice to pay no regard to either the threat or the refusal. Neither Mr. Clifford nor my father, however, were disposed to lose Glentworth, not merely for Augustus and me, but for the family. Mr. Clifford took the affair of the abeyance into his own hands, and pressed it with energy. Their plan was to wait, at all events, till this important point should be settled.

"The old lady may disinherit Augustus. He is only a grandson. But she will never disinherit the twentieth Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth, depend upon it," said my father.

"It was in vain that I represented to my father the wisdom of acting, ourselves, in a firm, straightforward manner, leaving all the blame of unfairness and injustice to Lady Devereux: in vain I urged the risk of losing all he had had so long at heart, by grasping more, when Providence had put the prize within his reach. 'Indeed,' I said, 'my dear father, it is tempting fortune, to leave your stake on the table after such a run of luck.'

"Augustus himself was quite of the same mind. 'Let us marry at once,' he said. 'Then she will be at liberty to dispose of her fortune as she likes.' But my father was inflexible.

"My father's villa, which he had taken, in liquidation of a debt, of the executors of Lord Wessex, was a Sybarite retreat. It breathed, throughout, a sort of pagan and epicurean refinement. The pictures, the statuary, the baths, the exquisitely-decorated rooms, bore the same character. I remember an evening—a soft evening in August—that I was sitting with Augustus in the galleria; a spacious hall of marble and mirrors, with an inlaid floor, and communicating with all the principal apartments. I sate before the piano; a Persian carpet was spread beneath the instrument; the windows were open upon the lawn. My father was writing, in an adjacent room. I sang many songs to my lover, and then we talked in whispers, and then I wept. We embraced; he took his hat and quitted the house through the gardens, and I fled to my own room. The feet of Nemesis, as Frederick would have said, had entered this soft abode!

"It is a singular sensation—that of eloping. How I felt, the next morning, in the boat, as we glided down the river, under a light sail, to the point where a chaise and four awaited us. Our destination was Scotland, where, however, we were not destined to arrive. We made the greater part of the distance by railway, and, descending too soon from the carriage at the last station, where we were to have resumed posting, Augustus fell. A loaded car was advancing slowly on the parallel track. He was thrown against it, striking his head, and was taken up insensible. For a week I never quitted him.

"We were in a cottage on the outskirts of the village, whither I had caused him to be transported from the noisy, comfortless inn, and where we had quiet, fresh air, the breath of a flower-garden, and exquisite neatness. He had regained consciousness, but not a distinct recollection of events. He had forgotten the accident. One of his first anxious inquiries, was, if we were yet in Scotland. The surgeon who was present unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative. A broad Glasgow accent confirmed his words.

"'I seem to have been ill,' said Augustus.

"'Yes, very sick,' said the surgeon.

"'And my dear wife there has been my nurse?'

"'An awdmirable one, my dear sir.'

"'My name is Clifford,' said Augustus, in what seemed a rambling manner, and turning

also to the nurse who had assisted me. 'This lady is my wife, Mrs. Clifford,' with the air of introducing me.

"'Avoid cawntradicting your husband, or perplexing him, madam,' said the surgeon as he withdrew. 'He wanders a little yet, but, with perfect mental quiet, I do not now apprehend brain fever.'"

The countess had related these circumstances rapidly, and with a good deal of agitation. She now suddenly threw herself on her knees and hid her face in her hands. "I believe that Augustus would have died rather than wrong me," she sobbed.

"But why did you not marry afterward?" said Alice. "Oh, Louise, finish this story, I entreat you, as briefly as you can."

"My father arrived," continued Louise, violently suppressing her sobs, as one who had wept too often to be long overcome. "Then began my worst weakness. He took it for granted that the accident had occurred on our return from Scotland; naturally, since a month had elapsed. He said that our indiscretion had not transpired, and that he made secrecy a condition of our forgiveness. We must come back to the villa, and be re-married quietly by a priest."

"We posted back; Augustus sleeping nearly all the way. I was ashamed to confess to my father that not even the profane ceremony of a Gretna Green marriage, which never could have satisfied for a moment the conscience of a Catholic, had really united us. The last reflection in some degree consoled me, and I hoped that the sacrament would soon repair all. But another event occurred, to derange my calculations. My father was obliged to go to Paris the day after our arrival at home, and set out so early that he saw no one but Augustus. As secrecy was still an object, he advised the postponement of the religious ceremony, as he expressed it, till his return. Since we were legally united, a short delay, he observed, was of trivial consequence. He expected to be absent but a fortnight."

"See us, then, left at the villa. You can conceive my shame and despair. My father, as you anticipate, did not return at the end of the promised fortnight; and Augustus received a letter from the town in Lancashire where the accident had occurred. It was from the surgeon; the subject trivial; but the date and post-mark telling all. He was shocked; reproached me, and finally, for my own sake, as he said, left me. As soon as my father returned, he would hasten once more to my side."

"See me then *alone* at the villa. My father did not return at all. He was obliged to go on to Italy. He wrote me, advising that we should celebrate our marriage without delay. It was an immense relief to him that I was with my husband. I merely wrote to Augustus that my father's return was again postponed."

CHAPTER XI.

"'UNHAPPY girl that I am! Is it to this, my father, that your successful schemes have brought your daughter!'"

"Thus I exclaimed when, after a month of remorseful solitude, I discovered that I was to be a mother. An unmarried mother! Good Heavens!—I!—Was it possible that this could be true of me? And month after month I continued alone. Pecuniary embarrassment was added to my distress. My father wrote that he was obliged to draw for the full amount of his balances, and begged that my husband would charge himself with the establishment for a few months. Should I now summon Augustus, accept the reparation of his hand, and in six months after give him an heir to the honors of the Beauchamps, and of his wife's ineffaceable disgrace? Never! The servants wondered at my being thus deserted, and one miserable fellow formed a plan for robbing the house. I displayed a courage of which I should never have believed myself capable. I had arms in my bed-room; and, roused at midnight by the sound of steps in the gallery, I rose, found the wretch opening one of the windows, ordered him to stop, and, when he disobeyed, fired at him without hesitation, while the shrieks of my maid alarmed the house. He fell, badly wounded, and his accomplices fled. This event did not add to my tranquillity, but my courage re-established my authority, which had begun to be enfeebled. At length, one day in April, I heard the sound of wheels in the carriage-sweep. As I had given positive orders that no one should be admitted but my father or Mr. Clifford, I doubted not it was one of these. I felt myself grow sick, and threw myself on a couch, where I speedily became insensible. When I recovered my senses, I found the mother of Augustus standing over me."

"'Louise, what is this?'—I made no answer. 'You are married?'—'No, no.'—'No!' she exclaimed with consternation. 'But you do not tell me the truth.'—'I am not married,' I said. 'If I were, I would not trifle with the thought of dishonor by denying it.' She looked at me incredulously. 'Augustus speaks of you with the greatest tenderness and respect,' she said. 'It is he who asked me to come here and take you to the Green Park. And I find you *thus*!'—and she glanced with pity at my figure. I would not tell her any thing; I was resolved to bear the full weight of my fault's consequences; or rather, I fear, I was too proud to inflict upon them the shame of my connection; forgetting that I had no longer a right to pride. I assured her that Augustus had not betrayed me; that he was ignorant of my situation, and that, above all things, I desired him to remain in ignorance. Naturally, she was not sorry to have an excuse for keeping it from him; for, though she was perfectly convinced that none but he was the father of my child, yet to affront the public dishonor that an act of justice would entail was too much for her to think of. She had just had a coronet placed on her brow, and you may suppose that she was not in the temper that welcomes humiliation, though, in a serious point of view, it might have been regarded as a salutary chastening of too worldly thoughts. With the ingenious sophistry that too readily serves our passions, she persuaded herself that it would be a kindness to me to save me from marriage too tardy to restore my self-respect, and which would render my fault impossible to be concealed. In-

deed I have ever felt since how unjustifiable was my conduct at this time, but it may perhaps be palliated by the circumstance that the mother of Augustus tacitly approved it. She seemed to try to make amends for this by her unbounded kindness in every thing else. She said she had a right to treat me exactly as if I had been her own daughter. She visited me daily; of course she supplied me with money.

"Ah, Alice! at length I heard the cry of my babe. It was a moment that compensated for my shame, and to sufferings to which those of childbed were less than nothing."

Alice, meanwhile, leaning back on the sofa, with her hands clasped, wept without restraint.

"I was lying in bed the second day. It was my father's room, for I had quitted my own since the departure of Augustus; and I could see, as I lay, the portrait of Annunziata. My child slept by my side, I could also see its face—that peculiar, indistinct face of a new-born infant; one tiny and mottled hand was protruded and irregularly clenched. 'She was thy great grandmother,' I thought, 'and yet her fault has been the original cause of thy mother's misfortunes, and of the stain upon thy own birth. Shall thy fault, too, affect unborn generations of thy children?' Then I recurred to Augustus, who was indeed seldom absent from my thoughts. I could remember the ingenious expedients to which he once had recourse to secure, each day, an unremarked interview. I could remember when he never wanted an excuse for visiting us at the villa. Now, it was enough to write me from time to time, letters of inquiry, with assurances of his love and fidelity. Yet it was I, not he, who was exposed to the ban of society, a pensioner on his love, a supplicant for his constancy; it was I who was solitary, unprotected, a prey to shame. I could not help bitterly contrasting his weakness before I had made him every sacrifice (not from ordinary female frailty, but in the cowardice of anxious love) with his present easy self-command. Then it was that, partly influenced by my injured affection, and partly by a wish to offer an expiation to my own self-respect, I made a rash vow to live solely for my child, and never while it lived to marry even Augustus. Legitimated, now, it could not be, and it never should have any legitimate brothers to rob it of its natural rights, and look down upon it with scorn. While I was resolving these resolutions, Lady Beauchamp came in. After the first inquiries, she broke to me that her son had accompanied her, and begged to see me. 'Does he know?'—'As yet, nothing,' she said.

"I looked at my infant. To see it embraced and acknowledged by its father, to be myself consoled and thanked by his kiss—could I deny myself this? My resentment was gone. 'Let him come in,' I said, 'but tell him nothing.'

"She went out, and presently I heard his well-known step in the dressing-room.—'What, is she in her bed-room? Is she ill?' he asked.

"They came in, and he stood at the bedside, bewildered and pale. Unaccustomed to the darkened chamber, he could not tell if I were extremely ill or not.

"'Oh, why, Louise, have you concealed from me that you were ill?' he said, in a very tremulous voice, and kneeling by the bedside.

"'My illness, Augustus, is but of yesterday, though I have carried the cause many months in my bosom.'

"How he started! A faint cry of the babe, awakening, explained my words. His first exclamation was of joy and tenderness. He kissed, first me, then his child. Then his countenance again altered.

"'How cruel you have been! You have ruined yourself, and me, and your child. How have you *dared* to deceive me thus?'

"'It is you who have cruelly abandoned and neglected me,' I replied, with excitement and indignation.

"'You must not say any thing to excite her,' said his mother. 'Don't you see you may kill her? Forgive him, Louise; he is taken by surprise, and doesn't know what he says.'

"I turned on the pillow, and wept hysterically. During the rest of the interview he was gentle and kind. Any one would have said that it was a scene of quiet domestic happiness. He came daily, with his mother, to see me, till I was well enough to leave my room. Then he proposed that we should be married immediately; but I had reflected deeply on our situation; and, my private resolutions and vow apart, was resolved, if possible, to save my reputation.

"The servants remaining at the villa were few in number, and strongly attached to me. My maid, who had been about me from the time that my father took me from Paris, was of incorruptible fidelity; and all supposed me married. Such is human nature, that probably the same servants who could not have resisted the love of gossip, had they supposed it a question of my fame, were silent as the grave when they thought it concerned the fortune of their mistress. Young Mr. Clifford, it was understood, would be disinherited most shamefully, if it were known that he was married. Though Lady Beauchamp visited me every day for three months, none of her people ever got the least hint. The gardener's wife—no unskillful *sage-femme*—was my attendant in the hour of my trial. They were Scotch, and the housemaid was their daughter. The unhappy fellow who was wounded in the attempt to rob, recovered from the wound, but died in the spring, of a decline.

"It was one of the things that added a pungency to my shame, during these months, to be associated, at least in my own mind, with the girl I have just mentioned, and whom this fellow-servant had corrupted. Before he died, I had them married, giving her a dowry from the sale of some jewels. She was as young as myself; allowing for the difference that education made, perhaps as truly penitent; grateful and happy to be made an honest woman; a sweet-tempered and bounteous nurse; and shared that office with equal tenderness and justice between her child and mine."

"Louise, I love you!" said Alice, energetically, in the midst of her flowing tears.

"So many circumstances combining to favor secrecy, encouraged me to form a plan which I communicated to Lady Beauchamp, who highly approved it. I put off Augustus, and the next day I was settled in the Green Park. Lady Beauchamp went to the opera, as usual, and, in reply to the inquiries she had regularly to an-

swer, told every one that there would be no more bulletins, as she had ventured to bring me to her house. The next morning, when Augustus came to propose going with his mother to the villa, he found me in the midst of a levee. All were delighted to find me looking so well, though certainly showing signs of recent illness. In fact, I was just looking very interesting, as they say. The world is too selfish to be curious; and Lady Beauchamp, with all her quiet manner, had a vein of hereditary subtlety. Her maternal anxiety lest I should over-exert myself; the fact, permitted casually to escape, that she had resigned to me her own room because it was on the drawing-room floor; the frank, cheerful sweetness with which she related to me a trivial affair that had occurred during my 'seclusion,' excluded the very idea of a scandal that no one could well connect with either her or me. If a suspicion could have crossed any mind, it must have been of a secret wedlock, known to Lady Beauchamp; but no one had the air of supposing a mystery at all. My father had been obliged to leave me, for a short absence, as he supposed, which circumstances had unexpectedly lengthened; and, meanwhile, I had fallen sick. This was Lady Beauchamp's story, which besides its probability, was literally true. I was perfectly well received; but (if you can understand that) the welcome of society and caresses of my female friends were a daily torture to my conscience. There would have been a feeling of expiation in submitting to the natural punishment of my error, but my success in evading the sentence of social degradation, left me more completely to that of my own heart."

"The sentence of society," said Alice, earnestly, "though just and necessary, is too dreadful not to be avoided by every innocent concealment; but, as a Catholic, Louise, you had a human tribunal before which you could take to yourself the shame of your fault, if that would have been, as I well understand, a consolation."

"The Confessional? Believe me, Alice, it is there that I learned truly to estimate my errors, but scarcely yet. It is needless, though, to linger over what remains of my history. I will pass over a fruitless interview with Augustus; the arrival of my father; his gentle treatment of me; his adoption of my child as his; his approbation of my decision in regard to my lover's claims on my hand. He returned in a new character—as Count de Belmont, chevalier of a foreign order, and aid-de-camp to the King of ———. He proposed to stay a very short time in England, and then to take me with him to Germany. But, before our departure, occurred an event that, though my reason tells me it was happiest for all, was then a cruel blow, and is still able to awaken afresh the sorrow of my worse than widowhood. Without apparent disease—without previous symptoms of any kind—playful and beautiful to the last, my little boy went from my arms to his cradle, and died, without a struggle, in the midst of a tranquil sleep. The physicians discovered an organic defect, which must have rendered his life always liable to a similar termination. This event occasioned my having one more interview with Augustus, and it was over the grave of our child that I bade him farewell.

"In fine, on our way to Germany, we were

to pass through Paris. One of the earliest calls, as well of friendship as of ceremony, which I had here to make, was on the Duchesse de R——. She had been in London at the coronation, and Lady Beauchamp had shown her a great deal of civility. She was engaged in her toilet, but sent for me to come to her dressing-room.

"My dear young friend!" she exclaimed, kissing me on both cheeks, "I am enchanted to see you at Paris. How is your good aunt, my Lady Beauchamp? and your aunt, my Lady Mortmain? and M. le Comte, your father, whom I have not had the pleasure of seeing, but to whom you shall introduce me presently? Really! you are come to be the *belle Anglaise* of the season at Paris. Come, Lucille," she added, turning to her *femme-de-chambre*, "be as quick as possible—I must go down and see M. le Comte immediately."

"Lucille placed a chair, with respect, for a visitor so cordially received. I had, at this sorrowful period, an exterior of sweetness and gaiety with strangers. I gave Madame de R—— the latest news of her London friends. Meanwhile, I watched the operations of Lucille, whose skill in her *métier* I observed with interest. A black-eyed, long eye-lashed, slender little brunette, of fourteen or fifteen years, assisted her. Lucille, on the other hand, eyed me with evidently professional attention, regarding more my clothes than my face. I smiled to think that if my youth and brilliant beauty needed the aid of dress, she could discover no flaw in mine. 'Voilà, Lucille,' said the Duchess, 'a young English lady beautifully dressed!'

"You are quite right, madame," replied Lucille, 'but if mademoiselle will pardon my freedom, her exquisite costume is a trifle too exquisite for a young lady. One would say—a young bride!'

"The Duchess laughed, and I said that I thought the criticism of Lucille extremely just, but that I had given my dress the character she objected to, on purpose, as suited to my position. Lucille uttered a name that made me start.

"Clarinelle, bring madame's handkerchief."

"Altered as they both were, dimmed as were my own recollections, I recognized in a moment the traits of my mother and sister. Old M. Clairvoix's death had reduced them to this necessity. Clarie held open the door, and both courtesied profoundly, as I went out before the duchess.

"We had magnificent apartments in the Rue de Rivoli. Ushered, by a tall footman, through a suite of rich saloons, my mother and sister entered my boudoir with the respectful air of persons accustomed to wealth, but no less to reverence its possessors. I had made a pretext with the duchess of needing a French maid, and Lucille was anxious to place Clarinelle. This seemed really an opening, according to the duchess; and Lucille, who was very much pleased with my graciousness and beautiful French, came resolved, if the salary I offered turned out to be so large as the duchess hinted, to offer the services of both, in order not to be separated. The valet retired, and closed the door. I had already requested them to be seated, and now, advancing to the astonished Lucille, knelt and put my arms round her, saying,

in a low voice—*‘Ma mère! Je suis Louise, moi!’*

“‘Louise!’ she shrieked.

“‘Louise!’ exclaimed Clarinelle, rising and coming toward us, pale and trembling.

“‘*Oui—ta sœur, Clarinelle,*’ I said, inviting her with my hand. She sprang forward, and threw her arms round my neck. My mother embraced me, and fainted. It was a little of what you call French nature; but I believe it would not have been unnatural in any country.

“‘Ah, how beautiful she is, is she not, Clarinelle?’ was my poor mother’s first exclamation. Then, regarding me in silence, she added, bursting into tears, ‘You are the image of your father.’

“After the first spontaneous burst, they had less *abandon*; and, as our interview proceeded, in spite of all I could do, both became constrained. Clarinelle regarded me timidly; my mother with a mixture of affection and distrust.

“‘But you are become a great lady, Louise. What is this that I hear, that your father is a count, and that you belong to an illustrious family?’

“I explained briefly my father’s relationship to the Cliffords, and that we were acknowledged by this high kindred. As for my father’s title, he was attached to the court of the king of —, who had conferred it on him for important services.

“‘You will be ashamed of us,’ said my mother.

“Now, one good thing certainly had come out of my own personal humiliation. The false idea of disgrace which the world—the little world of the great—attaches to my mother’s condition, had ceased to make me ashamed of her. I felt that I had so much more reason to be ashamed of myself. But I could not succeed in making her believe this. The very assurances that I gave her appeared to wound her the more. I had to explain, too, without seeming to throw the blame upon my father, how that it was not my fault that for so many years I had never written to her. She listened in silence. A sense of injury, that had grown out of the cruel neglect of years, was not to be effaced in an instant. My father came in. She received him coldly. His own manner was courtly rather than kind, especially to Clarinelle. He desired me to take the latter to my bed-room, and leave him with my mother.

“I must say that nothing could be more suitable than my father’s proposals, or more generous in a worldly point of view. He offered a jointure with which the wife of a rich English peer would have been contented, and undertook to assure the future of Clarinelle. But he stipulated that the marriage should take place with as much privacy as the French law allowed, while, by proposing that the payment of the jointure should commence immediately, and suggesting that my mother should choose her own residence where we both might visit her, at least annually, he plainly showed that he did not at all contemplate their living with us. This would have answered with many a high-born dame, or with any woman governed merely by reason; but my mother loved my father, for whom she had once abandoned all—even her virtue and her fame. She was willing to repair the injust-

ice she had done to me; but from him, in turn, she expected a reparation that was not to be counted in money, or exchanged for a rank that, while she was treated so, seemed to her a badge of disgrace. She refused to accept what she characterized as the pension of a cast-off mistress, and she expressed her determination not to quit the service of Madame de R—. This was the more unfortunate because, as I am well convinced, if my father had taken it for granted that they were to live together, she would not have consented to it; but it was the vice of their mutual position that misunderstandings and heart-burnings were inevitable. The misery and jealous resentments of both were increased by a circumstance that at first sight seemed to favor their re-union:—they were both still so young. I have mentioned my father’s untouched beauty of manhood. Like the beautiful and rebellious Hebrew prince of the same age, ‘from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him.’ Sorrow had done its work on my mother’s countenance, without rendering it much less attractive. She had always an air of elegance, and the arts of a faultless, though simple, toilet, set off her graceful embonpoint.

“At the end of a fortnight, then, of vain efforts to bring about a kinder arrangement, the marriage took place. There were two English witnesses of the religious ceremony—Lady Wessex and your brother. Lord Stratherne escorted me from the church back to the Rue de Rivoli. With him, too, I had then a parting, which your sister Edith, I think, knows something about.”

“You were the lady to whom he was so violently attached, and whose refusal, under circumstances to prove that it must be final, drove him into that reckless dissipation?”

“He had discovered my secret. In the Green Park he had seen me, in a sort of half-disguise, caressing my child. I felt honored by his generous love, but it was clear that I could only thank him. It really seemed that I was destined to be fatal to him.”

“That is a dangerous power which, if you have not overdrawn the picture, Frederick appears to have exercised, of exciting and directing the passions of others,” said Alice.

CHAPTER XII.

“You are quite right,” said Louise; but now I must finish my history by showing you that, while I escaped, by a special mercy, the social ban to which I had exposed myself by yielding—though my will was always chaste and my heart pure—to the violence of circumstances in which, to be sure, my own rash and undutiful step had involved me, I was visited with it in an instance where I was free from the least blame, even of indiscretion. This was hard, but just. More afflicting still was it to be the innocent cause of suffering and death to all who loved me; and I know not Alice, even at this moment, whether my friendship may not be as fatal to you as it has proved to others. You should think seriously of this, my sweet young friend:—if you, unsullied as you are, even in thought, dare,

generously dare, to be the friend of one secretly but truly liable to censure, you will not escape a portion of my punishment. The instincts of penitence are prophetic, as Frederick would say. I may, for your innocence sake, be restored to honor and happiness (I feel as if I should); and you, for my fault's expiation, be required to bear shame and grievous trials."

"Louise," said the youthful Lady Alice, with a beaming glance, "you answer the question that I have been putting to myself, whether I may, after what you have told me, continue to be your friend. I may, if I choose to participate in your punishment;" and that beaming glance of divine faith and courage, said that the choice was made. The countess bent down, kissed her friend's forehead, and resumed her story.

"On our arrival at the beautiful German capital where we were to become resident, my father and myself were taken immediately to the palace, where apartments had already been prepared for us. It was late in the evening, and I was excessively wearied. We declined dinner, or rather supper, for it was past the German hour for the former, and ordered tea. The servant who brought it informed us that a new opera was being brought out that very evening, and that all the royal family were gone to the theater. 'It is not likely, then,' said my father, 'that I shall be commanded to pay my respects to his majesty to-night;' and he ordered his slippers and dressing-gown.

"I sat in a large easy chair, near the gloomy porcelain stove, wishing for the cheerful English grate, and indolently sipped my tea, while I formed no very *riant* pictures of the life I was to lead in this quiet court. After the luxury and brilliancy to which I had been accustomed, the apartments had an air of poverty. What a contrast to the classic elegance of my father's villa—the superb comfort of Lady Beauchamp's saloons, or the gayety and fanciful taste of my boudoir in the Rue de Rivoli! I had not changed my traveling habit, and, having slept in the carriage, my hair, which fell round my face, was slightly disordered; as I glanced at myself in a mirror opposite my chair, I thought I had never looked so ill in my life. While I was revolving these variously disagreeable thoughts, the door opened, and Count Schönberg was announced. My father rose, with evident *empressement*, to receive the gentleman who entered.

"He was a man of apparently my father's age, with fair hair and complexion, very tall, a figure rather inclining to stoutness, but active, a peculiarly pleasant Saxon face—the features regular without being exactly handsome, and a mild, but very steady look. He wore rather ill-made black clothes, and a black stock, carelessly put on; and his linen, though white as snow, was ill-fitted, and gave an air of negligence to his costume. This personage did not impose upon me very much, and I received him, I believe, with an impertinent smile, which, in spite of my own efforts to avoid it, I had learned in London.

"Count Schönberg embraced my father in the continental fashion, declaring that he was heartily welcome to —. He then turned to me, with an air that demanded an introduction.

"My daughter, count."

"I saluted my father's friend with courtesy,

but he took my hand in a very paternal way, saying, 'She is very like you, De Belmont. I hope we shall make Germany agreeable to you, my dear young lady, even in this dullest of capitals and courts.'

"He threw himself, without ceremony, into a chair, and begged for a cup of tea. Count Schönberg seemed very glad to see my father. He said he had heard, at the opera, of our arrival, and, as the king's back was turned, had stolen away to welcome us. He asked many questions about persons in England; particularly those connected with the court, with which he was, evidently, well acquainted. My father was not so well able to satisfy him on these points as myself, and the count, soon finding that this was the case, directed his conversation to me. He was playful in his remarks, and occasionally shrewd. He rather amused me, and, as the topics were decidedly within my tether, I gradually became lively. My father listened, and, when appealed to, answered with a deference that singularly contrasted with the careless and familiar manner of his friend.

"At last I grew weary, and, making an excuse on the score of the extreme fatigue of our journey, partly taking my father's silence as a hint that he would prefer being alone with Count Schönberg, I embraced him, and, familiarly saluting the count—who had at the moment exceedingly the air of envying my father the kiss I had bestowed, and with a good-humored freedom that his years possibly warranted, said as much, retired to my own room.

"The next morning, I had quite forgotten our evening visitor, till my father, at the end of our breakfast, asked me how I liked Count Schönberg?"

"'He is amusing enough,' I answered. 'He strikes me as being quite like an English country gentleman of the old school, good-humored, frank, with a consciousness of his local importance, and disposed to a paternal familiarity with all the young girls, his own daughters or those of his friends. Who is he?'

"'A very influential personage in this palace; not to say in this kingdom.'

"My curiosity was a little excited. 'He is prime minister, perhaps.'

"'Try again, Loo.'

"'The king's favorite gold-stick in waiting, I suppose.'

"'That is nearer the mark,' said my father. 'Count Schönberg is no less a personage than Frederick Augustus the Second, the sovereign of this country. The king, who rather enjoys a mystification, was disposed to let you remain awhile in ignorance of his real rank, but I would not consent.'

"Not a day elapsed that the king did not spend a portion of the morning in my father's apartments. He was always ushered in as Count Schönberg, and always asked for me if I was not already in the room. The first morning, he reproached me for my altered manner. 'I see you have forgotten Count Schönberg,' he said. It was easy for me to fall into familiarity again, as I was not used to so near an approach of royalty, and this seemed to gratify him. After a few days I was formally presented at court, and at the end of a week received a place near the person of the queen. The royal favor se

cured us a gracious reception in all quarters; the ceremonial amused me, and the royal family were benignity itself.

"But it was not long before I became weary of so monotonous an existence; the duties of my post were an intolerable slavery to one accustomed to be absolute mistress of her time and movements; and while this society was so contracted, in comparison with that to which I was accustomed, the private fortunes and style of living so inferior, that I hardly valued the position we occupied, I found myself, on the other hand, the object of envy and jealousy on account of it. Without aiming at display, rather avoiding it on the contrary, I naturally fell, as the mistress of my father's establishment, into the sustained splendor to which I had been used in England. In some points of view I fell intentionally short of persons greatly our inferiors in fortune, but the *tout ensemble* of our establishment was superior to any. People who resented being outshone by foreign adventurers and upstarts, asked what was the secret of the favor we enjoyed at court, and especially with the king. A scandalous reason was the easiest to assign, the most credible, and the most willingly believed. The king's paternal familiarity, and the playful manner which he encouraged me to adopt toward him on occasions where etiquette did not forbid, gave probable grounds for insinuations which were privately circulated to my discredit.

The truth was, that this sovereign, who had been twice married without issue, was passionately fond of children. He envied my father his daughter. It was not the feeling of a sovereign who wished for an heir—a girl would have been of no use in that respect—but of a man with a father's heart longing for offspring. It was a feeling I understood so well, my own bosom ever yearning for the infant I had lost; and when he happened once, by way of accounting for a tenderness which I might have misunderstood, to express how much he felt his childlessness, and added that it was a longing which a young lady like myself could not comprehend, my sudden burst of grief surprised him. From that time his manner toward me was different. He saw that I understood and sympathized with him. I believe that he in some degree divined my secret. He became anxious that I should marry, and remain attached to his court. He proposed to my father several alliances.

"He was conversing with me one day on this subject, in the queen's private apartments; and, in answer to the reasons urged by both their majesties why I should marry, I offered many pleas; among others, that I was resolved never to leave my father. While he lived, I needed no other protector.

"But, in the course of nature, children survive their parents," said the king. "When your father dies, if you are not married, who is to protect you then?"

"Oh," said I, gayly, "my father is a young man yet. It will be many, many years before I shall be deprived of him in the course of nature, sire; and then, if I live so long, I shall be old enough to dispense with a protector."

"That evening my father was singularly tender to me. He made me sit up with him extremely late, telling me much of my history, and

of his own, that I had never before so clearly understood. He spoke with sorrow of his early conduct toward my mother, and said that in spite of the king's kindness, he was now desirous of quitting Germany, and inducing mamma to join us in Italy, where we might yet live happily together away from the ambitious schemes and delusive successes of the world."

"In the night I dreamed—as I often did, and still do—of Augustus;—I thought that we were reconciled and reunited: I awoke just as I felt the impression of his kiss upon my lips. My father, quite dressed, was standing over me. It was he who had kissed me.

"My dear father, what is the matter?"

"I was really surprised; for I did not remember that my father had ever before, even when I was a little girl, entered my bed-room. Indeed, his delicacy toward me, in respect to my sex, was ever most scrupulous.

"I came in to look at you sleeping," he said, "and could not resist the wish to embrace you. I beg pardon for intruding, and for disturbing your rest. I believe I am getting into my dotage. God bless you, my dear child," and he kissed me again; "now sleep quietly."

"The scandal in regard to our relations with the king, had gradually assumed a definite shape, and had reached my father. He determined at once to trace it to its author, if any it had, or at least to some one who would take the responsibility of it, if any one dared. He might easily have been evaded, but there was a sort of intrigue on foot to make the court too hot for us. He arrived very soon at a nobleman who had solicited the post now held by my father. This gentleman permitted himself to say, that he had heard and repeated the report as an *on dit*, and, upon his honor, he could not affirm that he wholly disbelieved it. My father knocked him down. The result, of course, was a meeting, which took effect on the morning when my father came to my room, as I have related.

"I had not risen, was asleep in the bed where he had embraced and blessed me, when he was brought in, mortally wounded. The news was not broken to me with much discretion, and in the course of the terrible days that followed, I learned too exactly the cause of the duel. On the second day, mortification took place; my father confessed, received the last sacraments, and, in a few hours, was no more.

"Count H —, his antagonist, who—gaining the first shot, was not even fired at, fled to Italy. Two months after, it became known that he had been killed in a duel with a person unknown, who also was severely wounded. The second of the count even did not know the name of the other party. It was your brother. Lord Wessex was his second. Your brother was already far from well; but you can not be ignorant that this wound caused the rapid development of his fatal hereditary disease. Can you still be my friend, Alice?"

"Since I was so great a worldly gainer, it is fit that I should suffer somehow, as you say I shall. Poor Ludovic! What would he have said to my shrinking from one that he avenged at such an expense?"

"I wrote to my mother. Embittered by a deep chagrin, and irritable from failing health (as I have since learned from Clarinelle) she

gave credence to the infamous insinuations by which my father's duel was accounted for. She wrote me a letter, which only from a mother could I have endured. I wished to quit—and its court immediately, but for whose protection? I could not carry the infection of my sullied name to Lady Beauchamp's roof, where Grace Clifford was just ceasing to be a child. Augustus? No, that was more than ever impossible.

"You must not suppose that in the court circle I was suspected of crime; the queen herself was perfectly aware of the king's paternal feeling. She might as well be jealous, she said, of his fondness for his own nieces. Another good friend I had was Count Schönberg, whose name the king had assumed in his incognito visits to my father. This nobleman was the only individual, I believe, acquainted with the true origin of my father's favor with his sovereign. The count was a man nearly seventy, and, in the king's youth, had been his preceptor and the companion of his travels. I escaped finally from my embarrassments, as the name I now bear informs you, by pledging to him the obedience and affection of a daughter; for, to tell you the plain truth, dear, Alice, which, after your courageous promise of friendship, I am bound to do—though I am Countess Schönberg (the name is a translation of my own, you observe), by the king of—'s letters patent, though I do the honors of the legation which has been conferred upon the count, I am really not his wife."

"Not his wife!" exclaimed Alice, with a start, "What then?"

"His adopted daughter," said the countess, quietly. "The king, the queen, two of my own confidential servants, and some other persons, including my confessor, are acquainted with this singular fact. I was to have married Count Schönberg; it was all done except the religious ceremony; invitations had been issued for the court ball that was to signalize it; and, the day before that appointed, I drew back—changed my mind—no matter why. They persuaded me, among them, that the least reparation I could offer to the count's wounded dignity, was to let it be supposed that it had gone on as was intended. In the state of desperation I was in, to make a new *éclat* was the thing of all others I dreaded. I let them do as they liked. I went to the ball as a bride, and to Vienna as Madame de Schönberg. It is a very incongruous position; but, in fact, without infinite ridicule to all parties, it can not be disowned."

Alice laughed outright.—"Then you are, really, an unmarried girl, like myself?"

Louise de Schönberg, or de Belmont, crimsoned—"Yes," she said, "I am, so far, like you."

"You have had a strange and mournful history," said Alice, seriously, and in a voice of pathetic sweetness. "And the seeming chance that brought us together is not the least strange part of it. Your experience of suffering makes you forbode evil to me in consequence; but no real evil can befall me while I love God."

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

WE must not forget our friends, Augustus and Frederick Clifford, whom we left in Milan, enjoying the hospitality, probably, of their illustrious kinsman, the Prince Santisola, while the beautiful Louise de Belmont is relating their story and her own to the Lady Alice Stuart.

The capital of Lombardy, destined again to be the scene of the events which make history, contained always objects of imaginative interest, to occupy a fortnight very agreeably. To a fortnight was the stay of the Cliffords prolonged, and then Lord Beauchamp professed his readiness to proceed to Switzerland. Divining very easily that, in his brother's beautiful neighbor at the Prince Santisola's banquet, he saw no other than the peerless object of that passion which Frederick had confessed, he had suggested to the latter to cut short their stay in Milan, as soon as he ascertained that the family of the Duke of Lennox had quitted it. But Frederick had carelessly replied—"I want to see more of these Milanese; and Santisola and the Cardinal interest me. They have not an idea of what is truly wanted for the regeneration of our Italy."

From this rejoinder Lord Beauchamp perceived that his brother did not choose to follow the Stuarts. Frederick, however, seemed really very much occupied in studying the feelings of the Italians.

"They fancy," he said, "that a change of

laws or masters can restore their nationality. Constitutional Governments, native princes, and a Commercial Union, are their specifics. It is the opinion of the present age that railways can save it. But God has given Italy its foreign sovereigns. To comprehend the plan of Providence, and place ourselves in affectionate harmony with it, is the way to attain true freedom and genuine progress. The most successful rebellion can but substitute one tyranny for another; all history proves it. But the religious loyalty of subjects transforms the sword of foreign despotism into a golden scepter."

Frederick, however, at length appeared to think that they had lingered in Milan as long as pride or decency required; he assented, therefore, to his brother's proposal to take leave of Santisola; their passports were got ready, and the post-horses ordered; but on the eve of their departure, as they were taking an ice together in the Piazza del Duomo, Lord Beauchamp read, by the light of the *café* window, a paragraph in a just-received "Galignani," handed him by the garçon, and which, after some hesitation, he handed to his brother. It was a list of visitors to Switzerland, in a letter from Geneva. The Lennox family, Lord Wessex, &c., were mentioned among the English; among other foreigners, the Countess Schönberg. "Count Schönberg," added the writer, "has quitted the baths of Leuk, and returned to Baden for the remainder of the season."

Frederick mused over the paragraph a good while, in silence. At last he looked up, and said, in a cheerful, but decided tone—

"You are right; we will go to Venice."

CHAPTER II.

IT was Sunday evening, at sunset. The Austrian band of the Archduke Viceroy floated slowly up the grand canal, followed and surrounded by a flotilla of barks and gondolas. It is a diversion which, in Venice, answers to the Corso of other Italian cities. From most of the gondolas, on these occasions, the black, hearse-like cabin is removed, and their occupants sit in the open air, the ladies often in full dress. It is a gay scene. Though the barks are uniformly black, yet the crimson cushions, the silver mountings, the bright carpets, the showy costumes of the private gondoliers, afford room for the display of that pride which elsewhere is exhibited in a brilliant equipage. To the eye of a stranger, it would seem that there must be incessant collision, but such is the skill of the gondoliers, that this scarcely ever happens. They cross each other's path, break into and out of the line, advance, rest, or fall back, without ever interfering.

Reclining almost at full length on the black cushions of their barca, our young English friends yielded themselves to the influence of the hour and the scene; listened to the music that floated on before them, observed the beautiful forms in the barks that swept, slowly or rapidly, past them, or more often and earnestly gazed at the palaces which lifted their varied and stately elevations on either side, as they passed up the broad and winding canal; now, a rich and colored façade of Venetian Gothic; now, a deep chiaroscuro front, of Palladian magnificence. At a little distance behind their bark, followed a gondola with two oars. It was completely closed, notwithstanding the beauty and softness of the evening.

At length the music reached the spot beyond the Rialto, where the Corso usually terminates, but, obeying a sign from one of the brothers, the barcaiolo rowed on. They floated past the Church of the Scalzi, and so on to the Lagune.

"What a voluptuous repose, in this silent, gliding movement!" said Lord Beauchamp.

His brother made a sign to the gondolier, who brought the head of the bark round, to re-enter the canal. The city now lay before them, rising out of the water with its towers and spires; the last faint flush of sunset was fading from the sky, and the moon, whose slender crescent Alice had seen more than a week before at Chamouni, and now past her first quarter, shed every moment a distincter light. The black form of the gondola which had continued to follow them, floated past, as they moved toward the city.

"It is in such scenes," continued Augustus, "that I feel the power of the attraction which still draws me to Louise. Sentiment regains the ascendancy; principle seems a dream; life, nothing, without a participated love, such as I thought I once enjoyed. At such times, I feel tempted to fly to her, sure, at any rate, of find-

ing in her society a stormy excitement, that would render life interesting, though painful."

"You might easily do it," said Frederick, "she is at present in Switzerland, without her husband. Indeed, it strikes me that she always travels by herself."

"She seems purposely thrown in my way. What do you think?"

"I think that temptations are the opportunity of virtue."

"I never can look upon Louise in any other light than as my wife," said Augustus. "All the old patriarchs spoken of in the nuptial mass, were married in no other way. Isaac took Rebecca to his mother's tent, and she became his wife. In countries that you have visited, there is still no other ceremony; and in a part of Great Britain itself, not forty miles from where we were, and in which I *thought* we were, no other is necessary. Louise showed a want of moral courage; she deceived me, then and afterward, most unjustifiably; but it would be monstrous to call her unchaste."

"There is a great deal of truth in what you urge," observed Frederick; "and it would be irrefragable if you left out of view the divine sanction of political society, and the consequent sanctity of positive human laws."

"The Scriptures themselves teach us," replied Augustus, "that the most sacred positive institutions may be infringed in cases of extreme necessity, like that of David eating the holy bread of the sanctuary."

"That is a safer argument," said his brother; "but can it be pleaded by those who, by a culpable action, brought the necessity upon themselves? What a dangerous weapon, at any rate, does it put in the hands of the seducer? The rules which have circumscribed (artificially, if you please), the boundaries of virtue, are the needful security, and, therefore, the sacred landmarks of innocence. To have overleaped them, even in pure ignorance, ought, I think, to afflict a delicate conscience. But admitting that Louise was your wife, as you pretend, then I say that she is an unfaithful one, and appears to have gone the length of marrying another man. Under these circumstances, my dear Augustus, you must feel that every consideration of delicacy and principle requires you to think of her no more."

"Could my mind but be at rest in regard to the reports that were current about her," said Lord Beauchamp. "You start. I have never mentioned them to you before. I could not. Her father lost his life in a duel on her account. It is certain that she was an extraordinary favorite with the king of —. Her marriage was understood to be only an expedient for sending her honorably away from the court, where the public feeling rendered it impossible for her to remain. I can not suspect Louise of crime; but how she could ever have brought herself to consent to a step that places, as you say, an eternal barrier between us, unless she were conscious of having already created one of a moral kind, by some culpable levity short of that, I can not comprehend."

The gondola, impelled by vigorous and regular strokes, swept under the Rialto, rapidly descended the moon-lit canal, reached St. Mark's, and the brothers got out. They walked on the illumined

Piazza, crowded with the beauty and youth of Venice, like a grand ball-room, walled in by the most striking architecture in Europe, with the sky for a roof. Many a soft dark eye marked, with wonder, the extreme sternness of the younger Englishman. Clifford was pallid with his vehement indignation. Augustus, who observed it, almost trembled. As they were about to step again into their bark, Frederick laid his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Passion obscures your vision, Beauchamp," he said. "Years ago, when botanizing in Silesia, I fell in with the King of — and we were comrades for weeks. He is a kind and honorable prince. I can't imagine him even acting equivocally toward a woman of fair repute. But let that alone;—Louise—but why do I say what she is? I dare say she has been governed, in difficult circumstances, by incapable advisers, and taken precipitate, unwise, yet irrevocable steps—that was always her nature—but I answer for her fidelity to you—yes, I answer for her innocence."

The brothers were not staying at an hotel; they had apartments in the Palazzo Foscari, on the grand canal. They had disembarked, and were ascending the steps of the palace, when the same gondola which, at an early hour of the evening, had pursued their bark, and which had continued to follow it, came up rapidly, and the gondolier in the bow sprang out, ascended a couple of steps, to Lord Beauchamp's side, and touched his arm. The young noble turned, and the man laid his finger on his lip and pointed to Frederick, who, in a deep reverie, passed on and entered the great door.

"What is it, caro mio?"

"A signora desires to speak one little moment with your excellency."

"A signora! Where?"

"In the gondola, signoria."

Lord Beauchamp hesitated; he thought it probable he had been mistaken for his brother, whose extreme beauty made him often the object of similar advances.

"Are you sure it is I the signora wishes to see?"

"Perfectly sure, your excellency. I can not be mistaken."

Lord Beauchamp descended the steps again, and entered the gondola. It was not exactly a prudent thing to do, but he was just in the humor for something desperate. Whether he should be welcomed by the pressure of a soft hand, or the stroke of a stiletto, was nearly indifferent to him.

The interior of the gondola was not lighted. The door stood open, but Lord Beauchamp merely bent down, as if to receive any communication its occupant might choose to make, saying—

"I am at your command, signora."

The gondola, at the same instant, obeyed a strong impulse, that sent it out into the middle of the canal, and a voice from within, of great sweetness requested him, in Italian, with the inimitable accent of a native, to enter. He complied, and being just able to perceive, by the light that flashed in from his own palace door, that the lady was sitting on the left, he placed himself by her side. The gondolier closed the door, and as the only light now came in from

one of the little side windows, he could distinguish neither the face nor the person of his companion. The gondola moved slowly and silently through the water.

The lady did not speak, but, as he was necessarily in contact with her person, he could feel that she was trembling violently. He suspected that, in spite of her wish to speak with him, "*un solo momentino*," he was expected to take the initiative. Apart from principle, however, he was too much of a gentleman to presume in the least on a lady's advances; so he merely repeated his former words, "I am here at your command, signora."

But still the lady did not speak, and they floated on in silence, broken only by the almost noiseless splash of the oars. Once, another gondola shot past, and sometimes the light from a palace balcony shone in at the little window. The lady was dressed in black; it was nearly all he could discover by these brief glimpses, which, nevertheless, appeared to annoy her, for she nervously closed the jalousie, and the obscurity within became complete.

There was a nameless something in the slight movements of the stranger, there was something in the sweetness of her voice, which gave him the idea of a woman whose charms time, at least, could not have injured. The light from the passing gondola, as it shone in, discovered on her lap a beautiful hand, holding a handkerchief almost wholly of lace, of necessity very costly; and the hand itself sparkled with gems, of which one was so rare as to be confined, by a slender chain, to a magnificent bracelet. He discovered this by the steadier palace lights; and when the handkerchief was shaken, once, it diffused a peculiarly agreeable perfume. From all this Lord Beauchamp judged, not without probable grounds, that the lady belonged to the higher classes of society; and, despite himself, he felt the beat of his heart quickened by this silent and mysterious contiguity. Presently, after the jalousie was closed, Augustus felt the stranger's hand passed timidly within his arm, and her head sank on his shoulder.

"Who are you, dear signora?" he said, with great gentleness, and taking in his own, that soft, trembling hand. "What is it in which I can serve you?"

"In nothing, signor—in nothing."

This was embarrassing. Lord Beauchamp was sure that the stranger was really a lady. He recognized the freemasonry of *bon-ton* in her very familiarity. Her head reclined lightly on his shoulder, her soft hand was simply resigned in his. Augustus Clifford was as gentle in feelings as in blood. He was not extremely surprised that a noble Italian lady should have taken him for the object of a romantic fancy. No English family was so well known in Catholic Italy as the Cliffords, and perhaps he was, at present, the most interesting member of it.

"At least, dear signora," he said, "you will tell me how I have merited this confidence, and these marks of tenderness."

For some time the lady did not reply. At last she said with great sweetness, and a southern *naïveté*, "Can one tell why one loves?"

Lord Beauchamp passed his arm instantly round the stranger's waist, and raised her hand

to his lips. He was too chivalrous to do less in acknowledgment of such words.

"But, dear signora," he said, in a caressing tone, "is such a love—forgive me—what you have a right to feel, or I to return?"

"You are not married," said the lady, softly.

"No."

"Nor betrothed?"

"Nor betrothed," said Augustus, after a moment's hesitation; "but—"

"I am not married either, nor betrothed," said the lady, after patiently waiting for him to finish his sentence. "You thought I was? That was natural."

This altered the case, though, extremely.

"And you say that you love me?" said Lord Beauchamp, who observed also that the stranger's Italian was the purest that could be spoken, and her accent music itself. "And you are unwedded? Are you also—forgive once more the question—are you one that I can love without degradation?" Lord Beauchamp said this bending down to his companion's face, and in a very low voice.

Again for a long time the stranger did not answer. It appeared that the affair was taking a turn, which, whatever her purpose might have been, she had not expected, and which embarrassed her.

Lord Beauchamp could not help recurring to the more natural explication of the adventure—that the fair stranger, namely, whoever she was, had invited him to her side in the habitual levity of manners, which, whether justly or not, has been long attributed to the Venetian dames, and which his loyal conduct disappointed or puzzled. While he revolved this idea, the lady raised her head from its confiding position, and said—

"You do not comprehend me, Signor Don Agosto."

"Make me comprehend you, dear signora."

"I have been very indiscreet with *you*," she said, in a tremulous voice, "but otherwise, I take Heaven to witness, there is not a passage of my life that I should blush to have published to all the world."

Common sense whispered to Lord Beauchamp that these were protestations extremely easy to make, and as likely to be made whether they were true or no. Then common sense put in further a demurrer, namely, that if they were true, it was not to the purpose; and, lastly, common prudence and principle demanded in one breath, if to the purpose, to what purpose? Could, or would Lord Beauchamp love this fair unknown, were she as pure as snow? And if he loved her, what then? To all which was rendered an answer by the deep beating of Lord Beauchamp's heart, as he tenderly held that soft hand and waist, and felt the charm of being confided in and loved by a woman of so spontaneous and impassioned a nature, yet seemingly pure and refined, and speaking a delightful language in a voice of singular melody. It was a sentiment that blended readily with the mysterious *genius loci*—the spirit of Venice—that came as it were naturally amid the associations of the broad, palace-lined canal and the gliding gondola; and to which the very remembrance of Louise, and deep longing for her love and presence, his innumerable disappointments, and hope deferred, and deep dejection, powerfully predisposed him.

There are moments when the man who is struggling, on the whole successfully, with inward weakness or adverse destiny, yields to the current, and suffers himself to be borne by it passively away. So now with our friend. Augustus replied to the stranger's assertion of her integrity—pity his weakness—by a caress. It was first suffered; then timidly returned; and then, the stranger hid her face in his bosom, and seemed to weep. This lasted but for a moment. She summoned the gondolier hastily. She directed him to return to the Foscari Palace. She did not speak again till they arrived; but then it was to propose a meeting for the following evening.

"Walk on the Piazza at half past nine," she said; "and when the gondolier touches you on the arm, and says that Donna Maddalena is waiting, follow him. Will you keep the appointment?"

"I will," whispered Lord Beauchamp, who, in parting, once more embraced his new acquaintance with tenderness.

"My plan," said Frederick, the next morning, "is to go first to Lucerne. After what you mentioned last night, I feel that I must see Louise immediately."

Every preparation had been already made for his departure. Augustus did not oppose it. In half an hour, the boat which bore away the younger brother from Venice was crossing the Lagoon.

CHAPTER III.

AUGUSTUS is always the same. The predominance of the moral sentiments in his organization, and a high, habitual regard for what was due to his own character as a Christian and a gentleman, and perhaps also to the illustrious name he bore, stood him in stead of real self-government.

His brother's absence left him completely at liberty to keep his assignation with the fair unknown. He was on the canal at the usual hour. As it was not a *festa*, there was no music, and few gondolas. While he reclined in his bark, and watched the swallows that at this hour nearly darkened the air with their rapid circlings, he had leisure to reflect on the affair in which he was engaged. Augustus Clifford remembered that, in all his life, though he had had more sentimental engagements than, now they were over, it was agreeable to his dignity to recall, he had never had one that was criminal. It was a great consolation, and should he now forfeit it? The question was pertinent, for many reasons. He was indeed strongly inclined to believe that his unknown innamorata, notwithstanding her departure from the ordinary proprieties of her sex, was a woman of virtue, though of ill-regulated susceptibilities. In an Italian he could understand the mixture of pride and humility which characterized her extraordinary behavior: and he conjectured that the consciousness of charms which made her generally coveted, was at the root of her singular advances. It was a haughty beauty, probably of the very highest rank, and used to be adored, but subdued by love, and lowly toward its object. It was impossible that

in Italy an unmarried woman could be so free as the stranger appeared; but the canals and the gondolas offered opportunities which even a noble demoiselle might use to escape unobserved from the palace of her father or guardians, aided by gold and prompted by feminine fancy. Lord Beauchamp formed a thousand romantic suppositions in explanation of his adventure. But it resolved itself, at last, into this, that he had captivated the fancy of a woman whom certainly it would be rash and absurd in the last degree to think of marrying; and it was hardly conceivable that, having been led by it already so far, she would defend herself from the progressive dominion of passion. Such an intercourse was, at least, a violation of decorum, and could not continue without soon becoming criminal. He ought to terminate it, then, at once:—yet was that, even now, in his power? He could not deny that he recalled with emotion the interview of the preceding evening, and that his heart beat very irregularly in anticipation of that which approached. It was great infirmity, but might he not, by one purpose, redeem the indulgence of it from guilt? Why had he not a right to devote himself to one who loved him? He should be accused of folly, doubtless; but folly was better than crime. At all events it was best to resolve at once upon his course, for, if he left it to circumstances, and were drawn on to injure “Donna Maddalena,” he knew himself well enough to be sure that his conscience would compel him to repair the injury on the instant. However, he was curious first to see her, as to-night he expected. “A glance at her face, perhaps, may disenchant me,” he said to himself, but without believing what he said. A sort of instinct assured him that Donna Maddalena was both young and beautiful. Meanwhile, a closed gondola pursues his bark, as, nearly, at the hour appointed, he drops down to St. Mark’s, and he suspects that it contains his acquaintance of the evening before.

The truth of this conjecture became apparent when they neared the Piazzetta. Opposite the column and winged Lion of St. Mark, as the barcaiolo was turning in, the gondola in question drew alongside, and the gondolier at the bow, bending to Lord Beauchamp, said—“Donna Maddalena expects you, eccellenza.”

“I saw that you were alone,” said the lady, as he seated himself by her side, “and I would not wait for you to go on the Piazza. Where is your companion of yesterday evening?”

“He has quitted Venice.”

Lord Beauchamp was relieved, by this question, from a doubt which, during the day, had annoyed him more than he would willingly have allowed. It was whether he had not, after all, been mistaken for Frederick.

“I am glad you speak Italian so well,” continued Donna Maddalena.

“I have hardly spoken any other language for the last two years,” said Augustus, “at least, till very lately.”

The gondola was now in rapid motion off the Giudecca, and the lady drew both the jealousies. Lord Beauchamp turned, expecting to see her features, but they were concealed by a veil, and, as if that were insufficient, by a black mask, such as, of old, was constantly worn in Venice by the nobles of both sexes. She was dressed

in black, as the night before; her beautifully-formed shoulders and arms flashing in that shadowy yet clear interior filled with the reflection from the broad and moonlit Giudecca; nor was the elegance of her figure difficult to observe, for beneath her lace robe she wore, to-night, an under-dress of white satin.

“And am not I to see a face, Donna Maddalena, which, if it keep the promise of the form, must be worthy of being seen?”

“Can you not take my word for it that I am what is called beautiful?” said the lady.

“I do not doubt it the least in the world.”

“You are curious, though, to know my style. I can not show you my face at present, for you have yourself, unconsciously, given me a motive for concealing it, but I will describe it to you, that you may judge if it suits your fancy. You perceive that my hair is dark as the plumes of the raven, and that these ringlets are as silky as abundant. Even through my mask you may guess that my eyes are of the same color; my complexion is the clear olive of Rome, deep-toned and luminous; the outline is the exactest oval, the profile like an antique gem;”—and Donna Maddalena laughed.

A day had made a difference in the tone of Lord Beauchamp’s innamorata; the night before she had wept, and laid her head fondly on his shoulder; now, she laughed, and, after the first courtesies at his entrance, had withdrawn the hand, which, indeed, an Italian lady considers it a great favor to offer at all. Lord Beauchamp found this comparative coyness not amiss, but the gay description of her own concealed beauty moved him. Her figure, though more full and rounded, reminded him of Louise; as did her voice and laugh, though faintly. Louise was not, in his musings, associated much with laughter and gayety. He remembered her demure in girlhood, afterward gracefully composed, then sorrowfully sweet; at last, overwhelmed with bitter compunction.

“You describe the face of one who was once very dear to me,” he said, with frankness, and becoming constantly more interested.

“Who is she?” said Donna Maddalena, after a moment’s hesitation.

“You would know her, if at all, as the Countess Schönberg, wife of the — Minister at Vienna.” Augustus was surprised that he could say this so firmly.

“I have heard of such a person,” said Donna Maddalena, in a low voice. “Forgive the question,” she added, “since you say she was dear to you; but has she not been lightly spoken of—this Countess Schönberg?”

There was something in the way in which this was said that irresistibly convinced Lord Beauchamp that Donna Maddalena herself was a woman of strict virtue, and free from the slightest conscious intention of violating its laws. Thinking of this, he forgot to answer, and even to vindicate the fame of Louise.

“You do not answer,” said the lady, in a jealous tone, and slightly turning from him.

“I was thinking, Maddalena,” said Lord Beauchamp, starting from his reverie, and venturing to take the hand which she had once withdrawn, “I was thinking—whether you yourself might not be lightly spoken of, if any knew of these interviews. Your own servants—”

"I see you don't know the gondoliers," interrupted the lady. "Secrecy is a part of their profession."

This observation again startled and puzzled Lord Beauchamp. His companion seemed not quite so naïve as he had supposed.

"I am jealous of your remembering so well a lady whose character you decline to defend," pursued Donna Maddalena; and Augustus perceived that he was already treated as a lover.

"If I judged her by what I know personally, Maddalena," he replied, in a very serious manner, "and we were once very intimate—I should affirm, without hesitation, that the scandals you have heard were unmixed calumny. And, to be quite frank, I not only remember her well, as you say, but even at this moment, so dangerous to my fidelity, I love her—devotedly."

Donna Maddalena had gradually bent toward him during this reply, and at the end of it sank quite in his arms, suffering her head to fall on his shoulder. Lord Beauchamp, was not, as we have observed, a man very apt to resist an appeal of this sort, whatever it might signify. Perhaps he did not perfectly understand it; but his way of answering it was not amiss. He clasped both hands tenderly round his companion's most graceful form, and said, bending to salute the veiled brow—

"As I am faithful to the memories that connect me with another, so would I be loyal with you, Maddalena! I believe that you are now as innocent as loving; and, Maddalena, I never yet tempted a woman to her dishonor. I will not begin with you. Your beauty and love—for I feel and partly see that you are beautiful—have a charm for me, I confess, with which I can not successfully contend. Tell me, then, who you are, that we may see each other in a less perilous way than this, and, when our love has been hallowed by marriage, we will once more float together by moonlight over these beautiful waters."

Maddalena appeared once more to weep, and murmured inaudible words.—"Generous!" she said, at length, "you are all that I believed. But have you," she continued, in a voice almost of anguish, "renounced forever the unhappy—Countess Schönberg?"

"It is she who has placed an eternal barrier between us."

"If she were to be free again?"—

"She never can be free to me, Maddalena."

Maddalena became silent again. Lord Beauchamp considered that she was revolving the possibility of what he proposed. Nearly an half-hour passed. At her low request he closed the jealousies, to exclude the freshening breeze that began to blow in from the Adriatic. He thought that she now removed her mask, and threw back her veil. He bent down, and his lips touched her forehead. She raised her head and a tenderer caress became all but unavoidable.

"Maddalena! *carissima amatissima mia!*" he murmured.

"Thine—ever thine!" she whispered, in musical words and accents, "my life! and the spouse of my soul!"

"And yours, soon, by every tie that sanctifies affection—Is it not so, Maddalena?"

"I am rich, noble, and perfectly free," replied

Maddalena, disengaging herself slightly from his embrace. "I have no permission to ask of any mortal, in order to go with you to the altar. When I invited you to my gondola, it was nothing else, I will confess, that I meant to propose to you, and yet—now that you—in a manner most unexpected—yourself ask it, I feel that it is almost impossible. I must have time to think over what has passed, Don Agosto. To-morrow evening you shall have my answer."

They were startled out of this conversation, which, probably, softened as they both were, would not have ended thus, by the coming on of one of those violent storms of thunder, wind, and rain, which are characteristic of Venice. It was necessary to get under shelter immediately. The thermometer fell rapidly. Even enveloped in a Venetian mantle, ready for such occasions, Maddalena shivered. Lord Beauchamp wished to proceed immediately to her palace, but she insisted on taking him first to his own. When they reached the Foscari Palace, the canal was already in a terrific commotion. The rain was furious, the flashes of lightning were incessant and blinding, followed by peal on peal of thunder, whose instantaneous report indicated the extreme proximity of the electric discharge. Donna Maddalena was evidently terrified; she crossed herself repeatedly, and murmured *Ave Marias*.

"I can not allow you to go away alone in this hurricane," said Lord Beauchamp, as the door of the gondola blew open with violence. "I shall accompany you."

"Then I will go in with you," said Donna Maddalena, with agitation.

To disembark, however, was not an easy matter, especially for a lady. Maddalena was obliged to spring from the gondola at the moment when it was dashed against the palace steps, and, although supported by Lord Beauchamp, slipped on the wet stair. Augustus carried her into the palace, and, up a private stair, to his own apartment.

The storm lasted for two hours; its fury abating after the first burst. Then came another, of still greater violence, the thunder more distant, but the flashes incessant; the rain coming down like a thousand water-spouts, and the waves rising, in spite of it, under a violent swell from the Adriatic. It was impossible for Donna Maddalena to think of returning in the gondola. She had recovered from her terror, and sate tranquilly by her lover's side, enveloped in her cloak. A huge brazier of living coals expanded through the room a genial warmth.

"A century ago," said Lord Beauchamp, "these very apartments were occupied by my ancestor, and the founder of my branch of our family, then recently wedded to a young Italian bride."

"Whose blood runs also in my veins," said Donna Maddalena, in a low voice.

As usually happens, the opposition, however faint, which was offered by Maddalena to Lord Beauchamp's hasty project of espousing her, made him entirely forget every objection to which such a step was liable, and rendered him excessively eager to accomplish it at once. It was assuredly a most precipitate action, to unite himself forever to a woman of whose family and personal history he was entirely ignorant, with

whom his acquaintance of two days' date had commenced in a violation of female propriety on her part, whose face he had not seen, who had said so little to him in the course of those two singular interviews, that it might be doubted whether, if they were to part thus, he could ever positively identify her even by her voice. "Rashly—and praised be rashness for it," might in this case well be said. Our noble friend's indiscretion served him well where deep plots had failed. We have seen Lord Wessex—a man not utterly unlike Augustus in the original type of specific character—forefeit in a moment the one chance of redemption, and begin by one act of supposed immaterial profligacy, a career that must lead, step by step, to ruin. Augustus Clifford, by acting imprudently, it is true, but loyally, in an instance where the apparent temptation was far more seductive, secured at length his happiness, so long the sport of seeming accidents. The ordeal is, however, not yet complete, nor will the result be attained at the time, or in the way, he thinks.

"I accept your hand on two conditions," said Maddalena, replying at length to his passionate arguments. "One is, that I preserve my incognito as long as I wish it; the other that, when I have given you at the altar this pledge of my fidelity, we part."

"Part!"

"Not forever, of course; but it may be for years. I have a duty to perform—perhaps I should say, an expiation to fulfill—which forbids me acknowledging such a marriage at present."

When Lord Beauchamp, in his consternation, made no reply, Maddalena continued—"If I offered to remove my veil as soon as we were irrevocably pledged by the nuptial benediction, and never to quit this your apartment again till I quitted it under your legitimate protection, you would consent? What, then, is the difference, except that your faith must wait for its reward? Ask your own heart, my friend, if you have no need to discipline its impatience?"

It was now past three o'clock in the morning; the canal was comparatively quiet; the sky, as seen through the casement, was clear and bright. Maddalena said that she must return to her palace. She did not speak of another meeting, and Lord Beauchamp felt that he could not propose one. He must lose sight of her altogether if he did not promptly close with her offer. He consented, and a priest was sent for immediately by the lady herself. It was necessary that both should confess before the ceremony, which could not take place until morning light. Maddalena reminded him of this necessity, and begged to be left to herself for recollection. In about an hour her gondola brought a venerable-looking ecclesiastic to the palace, and at the same time arrived another with Frederick Clifford, returned from his expedition unexpectedly soon. Augustus was a little confounded to see his brother enter with the priest. The bridegroom *improvisé* rather blushed.

"Have you lost your senses?" said Clifford, when he had listened to his brother's rapid and confused account of what had occurred, and of what was to occur.

"I may have lost my senses, Fred, but I am

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resolved, in spite of all my deference for your judgment, not to brook interference in this case. I have decided for myself."

"I suppose I may see my future sister-in-law," said Clifford.

"I will ask her," said his brother.

The confessions proceeded; they occupied a couple of hours. Maddalena, who was superstitious about being married in black, had sent for her maid. An extremely pretty and graceful young girl, dressed as prettily as a bridesmaid, answered this summons at about six in the morning, bearing a superb robe, a veil of white lace, and a mask of white satin. As soon as might be after this, the priest and his assistant, the parties, the graceful young maid, and Frederick Clifford were assembled in the chapel of the palace. The bridegroom, ere the commencement of the ceremony, was still kneeling at the altar rail, when the bride rose, unveiled for a moment, and disclosed to the assistants a face of extraordinary beauty; she turned, as she did so, to the bridegroom's brother, who, after a moment's grave scrutiny, bowed. When the ceremony was concluded, Lord Beauchamp conducted his bride to the gondola, which was still in waiting. She turned, before entering, to give her hand to Clifford, who gravely kissed it.

"Say what adieus you like, my friend. The signorina does not understand Italian."

"Maddalena, it kills me to part with you. Already you are perfectly trusted, and perfectly dear. Father Contarini says you are right. I submit, but it is a severe trial."

"When we meet again, I trust that both will have earned the right to be happy."

There was a long embrace, and the gondola was again gliding through the water. Lady Beauchamp lay on the back cushions in a swoon, and her young bridesmaid (for she could not be a common attendant) with streaming eyes was endeavoring to recover her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE autumnal months glided away. nearly the same route, but without meeting, the parties with whom our history is concerned arrived in England. In the end of October, Lady Devereux died. By her will the bulk of her property devolved on Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth. His mother had an ample provision for her life, with a country-house; Frederick got an estate lying contiguous to Clifford Grove, or on that his father surrendered to him that property at once, Mr. Clifford to be compensated in a way pointed out by the testatrix. The brother of Lord Beauchamp became a country gentleman, with some six or seven thousand a year, to which his grandmother added a round hundred thousand in the funds. The moiety of the same sum was bequeathed as a legacy to their sister Grace, so that, on the whole, few families could be better off. The demise of his grandmother prevented Frederick from joining the Christmas circle at St. Walerie, but whether this was a disappointment or not to the Lady Alice Stuart, is too nice a point to be rashly determined here.

The winter months glided away. Parliament

assembled, and our brothers came to London; the elder to take the oaths and his seat: the younger, because they were inseparable. After Easter—that is, in the first week of April—the Duke and the Duchess of Lennox came to town with their daughter, and Lennox House was opened for the first time in seven years, and with great splendor. But the Cliffords went nowhere; it was the wish of Lord Beauchamp to live in great retirement, and Frederick indulged all his brother's fancies. They got innumerable invitations of course, which were answered by Lord Beauchamp's secretary, but this personage was directed by Clifford to send directly to him any invitation or note from the Duke of Lennox's family. In lieu whereof, the secretary, on the duke's leaving a particularly unceremonious request to come and dine with them, penciled on a card, was stupid enough to answer it formally, by "request," and declining the invitation. Clifford never even heard of it, and his grace did not repeat a civility received with so much apparent rudeness. Frederick called twice at Lennox House, saw the duchess both times, and was told that Lady Alice was out. This was true, but unfortunate; and the duchess, on the second occasion, being somewhat frigid (for the dinner mistake had only just occurred and was unexplained), he did not call again. Nor did they meet elsewhere; not in the paved wilderness of London streets and squares; not in those prisons of air and verdure—the parks. Lord Beauchamp had taken a great fancy for boating; and the hours that were spent by the people of fashion in riding or driving by the banks of the Serpentine, were passed by the brothers in sailing or rowing upon the classic *Thamis*—which Augustus imagined to be the Grand Canal—in a beautiful bark which he christened *La Maddalena*, and fancied to be a gondola. Lastly, even Sunday, which, as they inhabited the same parish, should occasionally have brought them together, carried the lovers to the temples of a different rite.

Besides his grandmother's decease and the interesting occupation of his own mind, Lord Beauchamp had a motive for avoiding society from the presence in London of the Countess Schönberg. The count had been transferred by his court from Vienna to London in the early part of the winter. The friends of Louise de Belmont did not fail to rally round the celebrated "wife" of an eminent minister; and she was not the less admired because it was certain that her "husband's" post was due to her influence, and that, however innocently, she was the favorite of his sovereign. Besides, were not Lady — and Lady — her personal friends, allies of Frederick Clifford, and sympathizing from position with the powerful? It became a dogma which it was not safe even for infidels to dispute, that Madame de Schönberg had been foully traduced. To restore the absolute brightness of a female reputation that has been even unjustly sullied, is not, however, an easy task. There is a point beyond which it is difficult to go, where all acknowledge the innocence of a woman who has been maliciously accused, yet her name is so associated with the accusation as to recall it inevitably, and sometimes with a feeling of involuntary distrust. This was what Madame de Schönberg or shall we rather say,

Louise herself was deeply conscious of, and was obliged to bear as she could. Yet a will not easy to resist, labored unceasingly to overcome this shadowy obstacle to her absolute acquittal in the thoughts of others.

One day Louise was receiving a drawing-room full of people in the morning. Among others Lady Beauchamp and Miss Clifford were announced. This made a sensation; for Lady Beauchamp went nowhere, making her mourning an excuse for strict retirement; and her daughter, for the same reason, had not been brought out. Miss Clifford, therefore, was a new face; and the reserve of the family excited an eagerness to see any of them.

"I called, Louise," said Lady Beauchamp, with her sweet hereditary smile, "to beg that Grace may come and stay a few days with you. I think she mopes too much."

"Few things could gratify me more," said the countess.

"It is settled then. Really what pretty rooms you have!" added Lady Beauchamp, raising her glass. "I think so every time I see them."

Now this was the second time that the Lady Beauchamp and Mordaunt had ever seen them in her life.

A young lady of exquisite beauty spoke to Miss Clifford, next whom she happened to sit. Her dress and shawl of delicate colors, and small, open, brilliant bonnet, with flowers, contrasted strongly with Miss Clifford's close cottage, tied with black ribbons, and crape-trimmed dress. Nor were the faces less contrasted than the costumes. It was the blushing Aurora with her tresses of golden radiance, greeting, as sister, some soft Evening—daughter of Starlight and the earth's yet transparent Shadow.

A lady, no longer young, but of a superb and gracious presence, rose and bade Madame de Schönberg good morning, with some ceremony. The countess accompanied her to the door of the ante-room. The young lady who had spoken to Miss Clifford bowed and followed.

"Who are they?" demanded Lady Beauchamp.

"You don't know them? 'Tis the Duchess of Lennox and Lady Alice Stuart."

"You remind me of a fault. They called, and I have quite forgotten to leave a card in return. But I never knew them, and why they called I have not the slightest notion. It's quite a different set, you know."

"Since Lady Alice came out we have changed all that," observed Lord Maltravers, drily. "You are getting behind the age in your seclusion, my dear Lady Beauchamp. Lennox House is now the center of fashion as well as of piety."

"The saints have invaded society as the Goths descended into Italy, and Lady Alice is their invincible Alaric," said Count F—.

"Is Lady Alice a saint?" asked Grace Clifford.

Several individuals of different sexes now volunteered a character of Lady Alice Stuart, all speaking at once. Some thought she was a saint, others not.

"Well," said Miss Clifford, in a momentary lull of the hubbub, "I should have sooner taken her for an angel."

"You have reason," said a young lady, who was separated from Miss Clifford by the chair which Lady Alice had recently occupied. "You have reason; and when you shall know her better you shall be sure of it." The speaker, by her wearing neither bonnet nor shawl, was evidently domesticated with Madame de Schönberg and the French idiom which she employed was accompanied by a charming accent.

"One thing is certain, that Lady Alice has had a great success," said the Hon. Edward Plantagenet St. Liz, eyeing himself in a mirror.

"A beautiful girl, *spirituelle*, and enormously rich, has always success," said Count F—. "One sees that."

"One sees that," said Madame de Schönberg, who had not spoken. "But do you think that is all?"

"You shall tell us what is all," said Count F—.

"I seldom exchange a word with Lady Alice," said Louise, "but I have observed the effect she produces on others. Lady Alice believes things that most others do not. That's why she is thought by some a saint. For she talks, acts, dresses and amuses herself just like any other girl in her position, for all I can discover; only she does all these things more delightfully than any body. Now a great many young people who are charmed with Lady Alice are disposed to believe something too, without knowing yet exactly what. Does not success in such a case cease to be personal, and become what a philosopher like Count F— would call the fulfillment of a mission?"

CHAPTER V.

It was May. The first six months' mourning for Lady Devereux was over, and Frederick Clifford, trying on some new gloves, told his brother that for his part he was going into society.

"I have seen the rest of the world," he said, "and now I want to see London. So the very next invitation that comes I accept."

The invitation came, like the gift of a fairy, before the words were fairly out of the speaker's mouth;—cards from the Duchess of Lennox for a ball on Tuesday, the 31st of May.

"Lady Alice's birth-day," said Clifford. "That is just the thing. We will take the occasion for our first appearance. Any invitation for a day previous we decline as before."

The town residence of the Duke of Lennox was built in the reign of Queen Anne by a public-spirited duke. Its Palladian front, which might vie with the finest elevations of Venice or Vicenza, was the glory of Piccadilly. It boasted its staircase by Thornhill and its ceilings by Verrio. Unlike most residences of that date, which selfishly confine the whole splendor of their architecture, if they possess any, to the interior of their court-yards, Lennox House stood immediately upon the street. In front lay the pastoral slopes of the Green Park; in the rear extended its own considerable gardens.

Yet this fine mansion scarcely corresponded to the immense wealth of its noble owner. The ducal family when in town occupied habitually rooms that should have been appropriated to

reception. The duke's unrivaled collection of pictures covered the walls of these saloons; and with all the disposition in the world to admit his fellow-subjects to a participation in his hereditary treasures, it was really impossible, without intolerable inconvenience, to open the Lennox gallery except to his private friends. The meanness of the ideas which have governed the wealthiest aristocracy in Europe, is very observable in their town mansions, which are subservient enough to personal luxury and to the vulgar exclusiveness of parvenu patricians, but strikingly evince the want of that noble popular sympathy and appreciation alike of real dignity and real splendor, which raised in Italy the palaces of her merchant-princes and of the great families founded by illustrious popes. It is worthy of observation that the only private house in modern London which by its architecture, its extent and its position, is really fit to raise an idea or sustain one, owes its erection to the prodigality of a royal prince. But we forget the ideal noble of our *château en Espagne*.

The Duke of Lennox was very sensible of what belonged to his position, and of the debt he owed his country for the privileges in which it protected him. He even conceived that his wealth as well as his rank was a trust, a something that he held for the benefit of his family in the first instance, but mediately for that of the state and of civilized society, both which had a moral interest—an interest of the imagination, but not less real—that such families as his should exist.

When the family were in town, the spring that Lady Edith was married, considerations of this sort pressed with such force upon the duke that he resolved, purely as an act of duty in the position in which he found himself, to build another house in the center of the gardens for his own private accommodation, and to connect it with the former building by a gallery. The inclosed space became a planted court-yard, with an open screen of elegant columns and double gates of bronze, discovering the dark rustic elevation and imposing line of the gallery; and a group of very striking though very contrasted architecture was completed by the subsequent erection of a chapel. As the work proceeded, the saloons in future to be set apart for reception were found not to answer to the splendor of the new house, and underwent in turn a complete restoration. The duke's income was so vast and so free from incumbrance, that though his life was stately and his charities apparently profuse, he had been able to do all this in the space of nine years, in the most magnificent manner, without injury to his heir or the fortune of his younger children.

The new gallery was continuous with the west wing of the old house, and its ground-floor was made a carriage-way extending from a portecochere on the street to an exit in the gardens. This magnificent arcade, full five hundred feet in length, was laid with parallel lines of flagging between broad steps and walks, paved lozenge-wise with blue and white marble from the duke's own quarries. Eighty Tuscan columns of red granite sustained the massive and carved entablatures, on which rested the floor of the superior story. As there were two other ordinary approaches to the new house, the great point of

accessibility, in which London houses so lamentably fail, was tolerably well secured. The old entrance was now made strictly private, and Sir James Thornhill's celebrated staircase was to serve on great occasions for the descent of the guests to the state banqueting room. On a fête night like the present, this whole floor was thrown open, and offered a range of marble halls, where might be feasted without crowd or confusion, in orderly magnificence, twice a thousand guests.

By any of the three new approaches, you reached ultimately a hall in the form of a Greek cross, the fourth arm of which was occupied by a grand staircase. Here a rich mosaic pavement glowed with the finest marbles; with the finest marbles were the walls encrusted; the arched and deeply-coffered ceiling was violet and gold; the architecture, the christianized classic, in a pure style, but richer than the heathen type. It was lighted by jets of flame from silver cressets of fantastic shape; here a coiled serpent darted forth a tongue of vivid and forked flame; here a dolphin spouted light; here the bird of Jove grasped a blazing thunder-bolt. This illumination gave effect to many a statue in its lofty niche; to bas-reliefs of exquisite beauty; to ranges of colossal vases containing the finest exotic plants in full flower.

Ascending the staircase you entered, by a sculptured arch, an octagonal and painted vestibule, lofty, with a glazed dome and circling gallery of enameled brass. Opposite you observed an arch similar to that by which you entered, but closed by a curtain of rare embroidery. Its rich and involved pattern presented, on inspection, a central cross and the sacred monogram. A similar doorway on the left discovered a brilliant guard-room with Highlanders on duty. A fourth, on the right, conducted by a corridor to the new gallery through which all the guests must pass to reach the rooms allotted to reception.

This was the gallery of painting and sculpture; the walls of which were covered, but not crowded, with the choicest productions of every school, and down the vistaed length of which you advanced between lines of stately marble forms, ranged on either hand in imposing order. The vaulted roof, painted in encaustic, with subjects illustrative of the history and influence of the plastic arts, with the pictures that glowed upon the walls, disputing the pre-eminence with classic vases, and antique candelabra, and innumerable busts of emperors, warriors, orators, and poets, united to give that air of warmth and life which a hall of naked sculpture so painfully wants, and the absence of which causes the sepulchral effect of some celebrated galleries. The frieze of white statuary marble which encircled this gallery with an interminable series of bas-reliefs, executed in Rome by skillful artists from the designs of Flaxman, was not the least interesting portion of it, conferred at once a unity that crowned its splendor, and removed entirely the confusion that might otherwise have resulted from the number and variety of the works of art it contained. The suite of state apartments answered in spaciousness, as in splendor and significance of decoration, to this superb and classic entrance.

Lord Beauchamp and Clifford went together to Lennox House, and at a tolerably early hour;

anticipating a delay in being set down. The coachman received orders in accordance with a very explicit direction on their cards of invitation, and to their surprise the carriage rolled along Piccadilly in dashing style, thundered under an arched gateway without an instant's check, and after a detention so momentary, that both thought there must be some mistake, they were set down under a portico in a court-yard at the foot of a flight of marble steps. A brilliant crowd, however, were already pouring by other channels into the cruciform hall, and ascending the grand staircase. Music, evidently from a full orchestra, but softened by distance, gave instantly an impression of the vastness of the palace they were entering; the comparative silence, joined to the vivid illumination, of those marble halls was quite imposing. People lingered; and beautiful women stopped on the landing-places, admiring the *coup-d'œil*, and exchanging words in voices unconsciously hushed. The brothers overtook Lord Maltravers, who had observed their entrance.

"I see," he said, "that you, like myself, are among the favored who enjoy the private *entrée*; and in your case I understand it, but why the deuce I am so honored puzzles me. I hardly know one of the family. I don't think I should have come unless with the expectation of saying a few words to your beautiful cousin, Beauchamp—Madame de Schönberg. Why did she make a fool of herself by marrying a confounded foreigner?"

"What a superb balustrade!" said Frederick Clifford. "It is really alabaster. I have seen nothing equal to this since Rome."

"Nor in Rome out of the churches," said Lord Beauchamp. "We Catholics bestow the costliest works of art on the house of God, and you Protestants, Lord Maltravers, on your own."

"Egad! you can't say that of the Lennoxes, though," replied Lord Maltravers. "I have heard that one motive of all this extravagance in fitting up Lennox House is that it may be a practical answer to those who abuse them for the sumptuousness of their new churches and private chapels."

At last they got to the reception room, and bowed to the duchess, who detained Frederick with words of courteous inquiry, but without that maternal cordiality which had marked her manner at Milan. He passed on at length, determined, if he met Alice, to be very respectful. Nobody addressed him; his detention by the duchess had separated him from his brother, and he was personally known, or rather remembered, by very few.

The parting of a rocket, the national anthem from the full band, and the first gun of a royal salute in the gardens, announced that a young and graceful woman, who is sometimes termed, in language meant to be respectful, 'the highest personage in the realm,' but who in this house was considered, in a somewhat antiquated spirit, to be their anointed sovereign lady and mistress, was descending from her carriage at the private entrance. Among the persons invited by the Duchess of Lennox to the yellow drawing-room, where this august personage condescended to repose before opening the quadrille, were her own not very distant relatives, the heir of the Beauchamps and his brother—both *preux chevaliers*.

in heart as well as in appearance. This lady never forgets any one. She remembered Clifford, and graciously commanded him to join the quadrille. In this way it happened that Frederick found himself presently the *vis-à-vis* of Lady Alice Stuart, and holding the hand of the charming Duchess of Montreal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE new ball-room at Lennox House was a magnificent and fanciful Hall of Terpsichore, and we will match it in that respect with any that has been described by the author of "Coningsby."

A double Corinthian colonnade of white marble of Carrara, supporting a highly enriched entablature of the same glittering material, formed a broad and illuminated arcade around the vast and polished central floor, of mosaic, in rare woods, allotted for dancing. The space within the colonnade, destined for promenading or repose, was laid with costly carpets, and furnished with couches worthy of a Roman villa.

The walls, paneled with brilliant mirrors, that inclosed a series of paintings in encaustic, represented the history of the dance—the fabulous era—sea-nymphs sporting round the shell-car of Galatea; Bacchantes and reeling Satyrs advancing with the leopards that drew the chariot of Dionysos and Ariadne; Diana and her train in a moonlit grove, mysteriously encircling the sleeping Endymion. Opposite were the sacred dances of the Hebrews. The central panel of this series was an idea equally new and beautiful, and executed with singular grace; angels in the first Paradise, charming Adam into that deep sleep which preceded the creation of Eve. At the foot of this much-admired compartment was a scroll in blue and silver, to the effect that it had been painted from a design and cartoon of the Lady Alice Stuart. There were also the dances of the Greeks, of the Orientals, various national dances of Europe. The walls were a study of brilliant and grotesque costume. Polished modern civilization was represented by a ball at the Court of France in the period of its most picturesque splendor, and the war-dance of the American Indian was not wanting, executed after the original designs of Catlin.

Above the entablature all was marble and gold to the cornice, but the uniformity of this superior wall was broken by sculpture; an endless hymeneal procession of nymphs and dancing girls, with youths and Loves and graceful Genii, in complete relief; and all the last, like the flower-crowned god of wedlock, who led their train, brandished golden torches, that diffused a light at once pervading and intense. The vault of the ceiling represented the azure vault of heaven, with compartments formed by enormous wreaths and festoons of flowers; in these were depicted the history of Psyche, with flying Cupids, worthy of Correggio, and, in the center, her nuptials, with the Graces dancing at the banquet of the gods.

At the moment when Frederick Clifford had bowed before his sovereign, Alice was standing in the brilliant group of beauty and rank, behind the royal chair, and a faint smile played moment-

arily on her lip, at the instant and gracious recognition with which her lover was greeted. Subsequently, for some time, Clifford and Alice had no opportunity of speaking, but at intervals they had to advance to each other, retire, glide away, pass or lightly touch hands, in the movement of the stately dance. Presently, one of the figures required an interchange of partners and here took place a conversation in German:

"*Herr Graf*, I am glad you are come. You will tell us what it is we all want."

Clifford respectfully intimated that this was a wisdom he was far from possessing.

"The things you foretold came to pass."

Clifford admitted that this rather proved him a prophet.

"I dare say you might bring in my friends, the Whigs, again if you liked," said his interlocutor, making use of every moment for conversation.

Alice, tremulous, yet with a composed exterior, fell next to his lot. They had not met since their tender parting in the streets of Milan. Alice could not help asking herself, whether, amid all the extraordinary incidents with which the life of this singular young man had been marked, her own connection with him—all a history to herself—were not an episode merely in his experience. She remembered that Louise de Belmont had once fancied herself beloved by him, when he felt only a fraternal interest. Could she recall a single expression of his on which she could fasten, as unequivocally proving a tenderer interest in herself? Was he really too serene to feel at all, or, at least, to feel permanently, the influence of her sex? Alice was not unconscious of her own extreme loveliness; she was aware that she was looking her very prettiest to-night; in choosing her dress, in arraying herself in it, she had thought of him—would it be quite lost on that purely intellectual nature, like moonbeams on ice?

"It is a great gratification to us to see you at Lennox House," she said, avoiding his name.

"It is a great gratification to me to find myself here. I feared I was never to have that happiness again," said Clifford.

"Surely you might have come, if you had liked?" said Alice, with a glance which she immediately withdrew.

"I have to congratulate you on your birthday, Lady Alice."

"You remind me to whom I owe it that I yet have birth-days to celebrate," said Alice, looking at him more steadily, but coloring. "I wanted to send you to-day some slight memorial of my gratitude, but I feared it might displease you."

"Are you so anxious to acquit yourself of the debt?" Clifford could not help saying.

"No," said Alice, with a look of infinite sweetness and spirit at this half-accusation; "I am content to owe it forever."

"I covet nothing of yours, dear Lady Alice, but yourself," said Clifford, in haste, and with a wistful look; "but I see a flower that I envy."

"Now," she said, blushing, but taking the flower from her bosom, and giving it him, "I knew that I must offer you nothing else."

When the quadrille was over, he suffered the charming Duchess of Montreal, who was in consequence mortally offended, to be led away by

another for the waltz that followed. But while, leaning against a column, he pursued with a fascinated eye the form of Alice, and listened to the remarks of the crowd on her marvelous beauty and grace, he again received a command that left him no choice. And as Clifford retired from his august partner, he encountered his mistress. She greeted him with her sweetest smile.

"Now you must waltz with me," she said. "I have been engaged to you, remember, ever since last August, in Milan; and my cousin here, Lord Wilderham, who has but this moment asked me, must resign in your favor."

"To hear is to obey," said Clifford; "Wilderham and I are alike your slaves."

He found himself, therefore, waltzing with Lady Alice Stuart; but first she put her arm in his for a promenade. She wanted to point out to him some of the decorations—a beautiful statue of Terpsichore, by Rauch, at the upper end of the arcade, and her own contribution to the beauty of this magical hall.

"What has her majesty been saying to you?" said Alice, looking him in the face, with a smile of affectionate intelligence.

"She admired, as all must, the magnificence of Lennox House."

"And you replied?"

"That when political economy got beyond its A B C, the nation would build her one more beautiful."

"Don't you think it would be better to build model houses for the poor? Louise and I are very full of that at present."

"Louise and you?" thought Clifford. "The cottages and lodging-houses first; then the palace; and both for the people," was what he said.

"And what do you think of my panel?" she said, as they stood before it.

And Clifford was indeed startled by its original and highly imaginative character. The angels floated like one cloud; on one side some played on their harps, to inspire and guide the celestial movements whose charm overpowered the senses of the new-created—not yet mortal; and while, resting on a violet mound, he yielded to the irresistible trance, a rosy mist circumfused the form of Adam.

"You have understood, in a really wonderful way, how those fine creations of art which deluded the heathen into the idolatrous love of sensuous and present things, now serve to animate—" Clifford hesitated.

"The hope that disdains them?" said Alice, softly.

"Well, to say it in a ball-room is not perhaps so much amiss, after all."

"If you will stay, after supper, till the crowd begins to thin, I will show you the chapel," said Alice.

Love, it may be observed, renders useless courage and penetration alike. Frederick was both puzzled and daunted by the abrupt change in the manner of his mistress. Meanwhile, he had himself become a great personage. The distinction for which he had been immediately singled out by the highest and most considered personages, gave an electrical effect to his sudden emergence from seclusion. Those who had formerly known him, were now eager to claim a recognition. Those who had only heard of

him, were surprised to find his personal appearance really answerable to his celebrity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE banquet, of a fabulous splendor, was over. The gentlest of monarchs had retired from the halls of her magnificent subject. The ball had recommenced after supper with a most exquisite *pas de trois*, by Alice, Madame de Schönberg and Clarinelle; but though the dancing, of which this was the gay signal, was kept up with spirit, and Alice, sedulously maintaining the position she had gained, and the social charm of Lennox House, more than once rallied those who meditated flight, still even the ball-room thinned, and the saloons were empty.

Clifford, it was very certain, had not been able to avoid dancing however much he might have wished it, and, now that he was in for it, and must really stay to see the chapel, it would appear affected and ungracious to sit in a corner with a chaperon. And he saw with delight, not unmixed with apprehension, the facility with which Alice took the lead in a gay society, that evidently followed her as a divinity. It stirred within him the old instinct of social dominion. He danced with Louise, who, like the Cliffords, had not appeared at any ball before this season, and who wore a charming but singular dress of white and violet, that made every one ask if Madame de Schönberg had been recently in mourning. Clifford made his peace with the Duchess of Montreal. Ever and anon he met Alice, who had always a gay word or sparkling smile for him, and at last they were again partners. Frederick was no longer a philosopher, but a young man and a lover. Probably there was not a young man of four-and-twenty present who enjoyed the whole thing half so much; and the dress of Alice by no means escaped his attention, as she had feared it would. Its material and fashion were of a simplicity that suited a maiden, even of the highest rank, gaining grace from the disposition of the flowers—her only ornaments, except her own golden hair arranged *à l'antique*, the rich braids escaping in inevitable ringlets. Its color, so rare save in childhood, had not suffered, and gave her still that angelic aspect, which, at first sight, struck every one in this remarkable girl.

By degrees Alice grew less gay, and at length, as they reposed for a moment on a divan, she whispered her friend; they rose, and quitted the ball-room together. Passing one or two empty saloons, they entered one filled with a peculiar warmth and fragrance. "Let us get into the conservatory," said Alice, going to the open window. "We can go that way just as well, and shall avoid chance parties retiring through the gallery."

They walked slowly, and in silence, between the ranks of rich and rare exotics. The atmosphere, sweeter and fresher than that of the saloons, offered still the temperature of a summer night. Even Clifford was surprised at the extent and perfection of this conservatory. It was a tropical garden. A soft and dreamy light pervaded it, and this fair creature gliding through it, was she of earth or heaven? He asked himself the question in all seriousness.

His lovely companion evidently lingered. Now, she stopped to pluck a flower; now to point out a rare plant, and ask if, in his travels, he had visited its native region. At length they reached a sort of bower. On one side was a Greek couch of ivory, with cushions of green velvet; on the other, a shaft of alabaster supported a reduced copy of the Flora of the Capitol—perhaps the finest draped female statue in existence; the pure and lofty brow encircled with a coronet of flowers exquisitely chiseled. In the center was a fountain; a gigantic lotus of white marble, its goddess rising from the flower; the water bubbled and foamed round the petals on which rested her bosom. The floor was marble. A bright carpet of Persia was spread beneath the couch. Candid japonicas, the superb cactus, the splendor and fragrance of the magnolia, were blended with the delicious blossoms and golden fruit of the orange-trees that walled in this charming retreat. Alice called his attention to the Flora; her own Praxitelean temples were crowned with a wreath of white roses; white roses in her drapery garlanded her love-molded shape.

"I like to have you admire this bower," she said, "for it is wholly my own design."

She seated herself on the couch, which her light, spreading drapery almost covered, and drew one of her gloves. Her eyes were bent thoughtfully on the bubbling fountain at her feet. Clifford saw that she meant to give him an opportunity for a declaration of his love. He dropped on one knee at her side, and took the hand she had uncovered. The color deepened in her cheek, and when he ventured, without speaking, to draw her lips to his, she threw one white arm, for an instant, round his neck.

"I love you," he whispered.

"I love you, too," she replied, in the same soft tone. "I am sure you will believe it, even if I am never yours."

"Your father," said Clifford, drawing a little back, "will refuse his consent?"

"I do not know—I do not think that he would," she replied, with a slight shade of embarrassment. "I was not thinking of him—of any but ourselves."

"Explain yourself, my sweet friend," he said, gazing with mingled tenderness and anxiety on her varying face, and once more venturing to pass his arm round her beautiful form. The action seemed to restore her self-possession. She suffered his caress as quietly as if she had been his sister, and, not attempting to disengage herself, said—

"You are a Roman Catholic, dear Fred. It is a point of honor, or conscience, or both, with you, not to renounce your church. I can not renounce mine. How, then, can we marry?"

"Dearest Alice, such unions are—most frequent."

"But are they *right*?"

As a man who, sleeping and dreaming of transport, is awakened by a plunge into an icy sea, so was Clifford at that moment. All the resources of his intellect, his energy, and his passion, were neutralized and reduced to nothing by that single word.

"Shall we go to the chapel now?" said his beautiful companion, when for some time he had mutely regarded her

They passed down a length of the conservatory equal to that they had already traversed. A glass door on the right opened into a grapery, the purple clusters depending from a trellised arcade. At the other extremity was a carved Byzantine doorway, in white marble—vine leaves, grape-clusters, sheaves of corn, and other symbols. On either side, in a marble niche with an antique carved canopy, was a statue, less than life. One was the woman of Samaria, by the well, with her water-vase, with the inscription beneath—"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The other was Ruth, the Moabitess; and the inscription beneath—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." The door itself was of bronze, with bas-reliefs in three compartments. A rich and fanciful border of fruit, flowers, birds, and heads, in alto-relievo, inclosed the whole.

Alice paused for a few minutes, while, by the clear and powerful light of a silver lamp suspended before the door, Frederick marked all these objects. She read the inscriptions in a low tone; then, taking a small silver key from her girdle, unlocked the door, which flew open immediately of its own accord, quite noiselessly, and they entered a low vestibule. At her request, Frederick reclosed the door. The vestibule was dark, but she drew aside immediately a curtain of green velvet, under which she passed; and, following her, he found himself in the famous chapel of Lennox House.

A shallow aspersorium of *giallo antico*, carved like a shell, and apparently containing holy water, stood on the right of the door, which he perceived was only a side entrance. Alice dipped the tip of her finger, and crossed herself devoutly. Frederick was too sincere to go through this ceremony in a Protestant chapel, although he felt for the moment strongly impelled; but when, advancing, he came in sight of the sanctuary and altar, he could resist no longer, and knelt, as his companion had already done, in involuntary reverence.

The architecture of the chapel differed from that of the old palace. The fan-tracery of the lofty roof—system of imperishable vegetation planted in air, with flexile and radiant stems expanding from pendent roots—was sustained by a forest of delicate clustered shafts. Below was spread a rich pavement of Italian marbles. The clere-story was nearly filled with windows of painted glass. A series of niches, with decorated canopies, offered under every arch the statue of an apostle. The rest of the walls was covered with saints and angels, by Overbeck and Steinle, painted on a gold ground.

An open screen of white statuary marble, a master-piece of delicate carving, with gates of silver richly wrought, separated the body of the chapel from the sumptuous sanctuary. This wanted nothing. Here were the credence and piscina, the canopied sedilia, the lofty candelabrum for the Paschal candle—a magnificent work in silver gilt. The altar, ascended by four steps, was also of white marble, with a carved reredos of the same material. In the center compartment of the latter, the mystery of the Incarnation was presented in its immortal type—the Virgin and her Divine Son. In the

side compartments were kneeling angels, saints, and shepherds.

The altar was dressed as in Catholic chapels on the continent; wax-lights and flowers; a narrow cloth of snowy linen, with a deep fall of costly lace. The crucifix and great candlesticks were of gold. There was no picture, but, above the reredos, the flowing tracery of a decorated window, filled with painted glass, already transmitted the morning light, blending with that of the golden lamps suspended above the screen at the entrance of the sanctuary.

Lady Alice rose from her prayer, took the wreath from her head, and laid it on a small table placed for offerings. She then approached Clifford. Even in that sacred place he could scarcely refrain from embracing her. She was serene as the angels on the chapel walls. He felt, more and more, that her religion was so blended with the other elements of her character, so interwoven with all her tastes and sympathies, that really, in her case, a difference on this point involved every thing. Marriage might give him her person, consecrate her devoted affection; but, so long as they did not kneel at the same altar, he should be an alien from what was most intimate in her feelings and her life. He wished to know exactly what shape the scruples assumed which it was clear had their home in the recesses of her conscience.

"You have a right to know them all, and, though it may be somewhat embarrassing—I owe you so much—I have such reasons to justify me in confiding in your delicacy—that I will tell you all. You will remember, I am sure, that we are in a holy place."

"I feel it to be such," said Clifford.

"The marriage ceremony—the sacrament—I should wish to be solemnized according to the rites of the Church of England. With this, as a daughter of that Church, I could not piously dispense."

"The law requires it, I apprehend," said Frederick; "and if it did not, you can not think that I would object."

"Yes, but you would think it insufficient. If you are what is called a 'good Catholic,' you would wish for a re-marriage by a Roman Catholic priest. This, I could never consent to."

"No!"

"If you want to know the reasons, I must refer you to my uncle Herbert. I won't insist upon it either, because this difficulty might be evaded by our going abroad to be married. I should not scruple to be married in France by the forms of the Catholic Church in France, but, even then, from a participation in the most solemn part of the rite, by which the rest is sanctified—from the sacred sign of a spiritual union, from the pledge of an eternal one—I should be excluded. I am commanded by the Apostle to marry only in the Lord; but how can I be said to do that when in marrying I submit to be treated as a heathen?" said Alice.

Frederick looked at her in astonishment. Before the altars of a faith that she deemed apostolic and holy he saw her stand, animated by a feeling too calm and assured to be expressed with any excitement, and refuse to be wedded to the man she loved, because, in the religious rite that must sanctify their union, she could not be considered and treated as a Catholic.

"Yet," she continued, "were it merely the indignity thus offered me, I could perhaps affront it for your sake. But this would only be the sign of something wrong and false in our position, which time would render more glaring and painful."

"Go on without fear, dear Alice. Forget that I am your lover; forget my sex."

"You anticipate what I find hard to express. Yes," she continued, with great softness of manner, and hastily dashing away a tear, "I know, of course, dearest Frederick, that to consent to be your wife, is to promise to lie, one day, in your bosom, and become, almost certainly, the mother of your children."

"Beloved Alice!"

"When mamma was married," pursued Alice, "it was agreed that her children should all be educated in the Church of England. A good and pious Presbyterian might very well consent to that, but not a good and pious Romanist. Could *you* consent, I would not, that you should be placed in so ignominious a position."

"But there is another arrangement," observed Clifford, "more common and more equal; such as existed in the instance of my own father and mother."

"Which implies that both parents shall fail, in the most solemn of parental duties, to a portion of their offspring," said Alice. "And with what result always? This very morning, every member of our family old enough to have been confirmed, knelt with me on the steps of that altar, and partook with me, and in my behalf, of the bread of life. Edith was here, herself on the point of becoming a mother, and both my parents. All the rest were—my brothers. That is my idea of domestic bliss, my beloved friend, and, did I deliberately abandon it in marrying, I should seem to myself to have forgotten that the power which I possess as a woman, of consenting, is really a very sacred trust."

"Ah, Alice! you are an angel from heaven!"

"Hush, there are angels who hear you," she said, in a low tone.

Here was not a case of those ordinary prejudices against his religion which he would have combated. Alice had none. She herself was surrounded by all the external signs of his faith. She accepted its dogmas apparently nearly as himself. She did not consider the doctrine of his Church heretical, nor its worship idolatrous. The intolerance was wholly his, and was the cause that her mind, nurtured in religious sympathy, recoiled from a union with him, and not the less because he was personally dear to her. He saw, too, by the slight elevation of her manner and language above their ordinary tone, that she was at present sustained by the consciousness of a purpose which took from him every right to complain. She evidently loved him well enough to live single for his sake. Rich, exquisitely beautiful, the idol of society, with the highest social position at her command, she intended to observe toward him a fidelity which she did not ask from him in return. He could not forbear expressing a generous regret.

"Since it pleased my Maker," replied Alice, with a blush, "on the shore of Vietri not to withhold me from the kind arms of my preserver, this result has been certain. In any other point of view that first forced intimacy would have

been too painful. When you kissed my cheek as I lay wrapt in your cloak, helpless to resist it, I felt that, since it could not be a profanation, it must be a seal of love."

The clock of the chapel tower struck four. They started. She asked if he would return with her to the saloons. If not, she showed him a more direct exit. He would accompany her a part of the way. When they reached the bower of Flora, he begged to take leave of her there. Though this should be the end of their intercourse as lovers, he said, would she suffer him once more to assert the sacred privilege her affection had once already yielded?

"Yes," she said, bursting into tears. Clifford caught her for one instant to his breast, and was gone.

Returning to the chapel, after closing the bronze door, left open by Alice, in order that he might pass, he knelt for some minutes before that altar which offered, in appearance, all that he associated with a sanctuary; then, lifting the curtains which concealed the great door both from within and from without, he found himself in the octagon vestibule leading to the great staircase. It was broad day; the servants were extinguishing the lights; he descended to the cruciform hall, found his own servant waiting with his hat and cloak, and quitted Lennox House, having experienced within its walls the sweetest happiness, and the bitterest disappointment, of his life. It mattered little in comparison that he had been distinguished by the favor of his sovereign, and had achieved an unprecedented social success.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was on a morning of great beauty for London, even in June, that Mr. Courtenay wended his way to Beauchamp House, in pursuance of an appointment with Frederick. He passed from a quiet street in the neighborhood of St. James's, into a huge deserted court-yard, where the grass was growing between the stones of the pavement. He was received at a portal over which was suspended the escutcheon of the late Lady Devereux, and by a porter in mourning livery. He was ushered through a hall of black and white marble, up a staircase to correspond, with frescoes, somewhat dingy, by Thornhill. He was left for a moment in a grand saloon, furnished in the style of fifty years ago. Presently, Clifford himself appeared, and invited him to come into his own "den." He led the way, through several rooms, into an apartment so peculiar that we shall describe it.

The walls, up to a certain height, were wainscoted with ivory delicately carved. Superiorly they were painted in arabesques, inclosing inscriptions in five oriental languages, emblazoned in blue, red, and orange, on a ground of silver. The ceiling was Moorish, of purple, scarlet, and gold. A green silk divan ran along one side. Opposite, one window opened into a small brilliant conservatory, filled with tropical plants; the other, into an aviary full of birds of dazzling plumage or delicious note. The apartment resounded with their songs. Both windows were enlivened by the sparkle of a fountain. The

pier between them flashed with gorgeous eastern arms. Many brilliant objects of an oriental character were scattered about; the marble floor was covered with Persian carpets. At the upper end of the room the divan became a dais, covered with enormous cushions of silk and gold. Here was a Chinese chess-board; an Indian apparatus for smoking, with a long, snaky tube of silver, the mouth-piece formed wholly of jewels, representing the head of a serpent. Here, also, lay an illuminated volume of Persian poetry; and on a small carpet was extended a white Indian hound, with a golden collar, who raised his head with intelligence as the visitor entered. Clifford himself wore a robe of Indian cloth of silver; and, as they seated themselves, he clapped his hands, with a slight smile, and forthwith entered a negro, a Hindoo, and a Chinese, in appropriate costumes. The first bore coffee, the second pipes, the third, on a salver of enamel, a diminutive cup, of exquisite porcelain. It exhaled a perfume that filled the whole apartment.

"That," said Clifford, "is some of the precious tea that grows only in a small district in the northwest of China, and which yet never visits even Russia, so famous for teas. I advise you to try it."

"You are quite an oriental."

"I have collected a good many curiosities in my travels," said Clifford, carelessly. "You are very kind to have waved ceremony, and come to me, Mr. Courtenay, when I ought to have gone to you; but you will see, perhaps, why I could not, when I mention the subject on which I wish to make some inquiries. You know my tutor, Mr. Henry Seymour, of Oriel?"

Mr. Courtenay assented.

"Then you are aware that he renounced, some years ago, the Church of England, in which he had taken orders; and, forfeiting, by that means, a considerable preferment which was virtually in my own gift, submitted to the Church of Rome, in which he is now a priest."

"I knew the fact of his secession," said Mr. Courtenay, mildly, "but not the circumstances."

"It was chiefly, I believe, through my means," pursued Clifford, "that his secession, as you term it, took place. To be quite frank, which is always best, I want to see if the same arguments will have a similar effect on yourself."

"I fear I should scarcely listen to them with the same bias toward conviction."

"And yet, a Catholic, after seeing your chapel in Lennox House, and witnessing the unaffected piety of one, at least, whose religious training is due to you, can scarcely avoid feeling that there is much, not only in the worship and discipline, but in the faith of his Church, which have a powerful attraction for you, Mr. Courtenay. That chapel is full of things to remind you, every time you enter it, of rites that your Church wants, usages that she forbids, dogmas that she all but denies, or teaches so equivocally, that the major part of her members do not believe that she teaches them at all."

"Perhaps I might love more the Church to which I have aided to restore what she has lost, than I ever could one which was in secure possession of things that I so much value," said Herbert.

"Yes, possibly you might," said Clifford, pausing to weigh the reply of his companion.

"Yet, can you consistently hold what you do, without holding more? Is not your religion maimed for the want of things which, in the English Church, you can not have? I would instance a belief in the privileges and intercessory power of the Virgin. The veneration for St. Mary is undeniably what gives so affectionate, so tender a character to the devotion of Catholics. Where it is absent, I think you never observe the same warmth, the same lowliness. The frigid reasoning which refuses the mother of God a relative worship, such as Catholics universally render her, necessarily checks the pious instincts of the heart."

"The worship of the virgin," said Herbert, more interested in his new acquaintance, "is a beautiful and poetical feature of medieval Christianity, with which I am not inclined to meddle. Being not commanded, either directly or by inference, in the sacred books received by Christians, and not practiced in the earlier ages, it clearly has no claim to be considered an integral element of our religion. It seems to be a part of natural piety, carried, as I think you will allow, in some instances, to a superstitious and hurtful excess."

Clifford slightly started. "My very thought!" he said to himself. "You have no interest," he added aloud, "but that of truth. Certainly, without candor, it is impossible to be truly wise."

"A sentence worthy of this chamber," said Mr. Courtenay, smiling, and looking at the illuminated walls.

"It is essential to the religious act of faith," said Frederick, in a tone rather meditative than hesitating, "that, in believing, we do not rest on any process of reason, but submit to some external authority; and the only authority of this nature, an appeal to which is not resolved into a covert and specious exercise of private judgment, is the authority of the Church, calling itself Catholic and infallible, in communion with the Chair of St. Peter."

"I admit your major. I deny your minor. The submission of a member of the Church of England, calling itself Catholic but not infallible, and his accepting the faith on her testimony, does not resolve itself into an act of private judgment. A thing very essential to the religious act of Faith is, that the subject-matter be really believed: and the fact is, that the authority of the Church of Rome has been so overstrained as to produce submission, and not faith, in those who acknowledge it. To believe what is told me by a person (apparently) fallible, is indeed to believe it; but to say beforehand that I will believe whatever he propounds, however irrational or contradictory it may appear, is to swallow my doubts in the lump, at the manifest risk of strangulation, instead of taking them one by one. This pretended submission to an infallible Church is therefore, in fact, a covert skepticism—the cloak of profane triflers with truth, who, really, do not believe any thing."

"Strong language!" said Frederick coloring, "but, I am afraid, too true; as the members of the Society of Jesus have exemplified."

"It is by the agency of tradition, I admit," continued Mr. Courtenay, "that Christianity is made the religion of nations, and entailed as a spiritual inheritance on the latest generations. But then, the true Christian tradition is a tra-

dition of things reasonable and authentic; such as we find supported by the original documents of faith—the scriptures, as well as constantly taught by the church; and which the divinely-illuminated understanding of good men approves as excellent."

"The question then," said Frederick in a low voice, and resting his chin in his hand, as he bent forward on one of the huge cushions against which he had been leaning—"The question is—Has not the Church of England essentially violated the Christian traditions?"

"You have said it. That is the question."

"It is an historical question," said Frederick. "Precisely."

"You have, necessarily, examined it in detail."

"And am sure that no objection can be urged against our doctrines, practices, ritual, orders, jurisdiction or relation to the temporal power, which may not be urged with equal, and in some instances with greater force, against those of the Church of Rome itself. No weapon that you can wield against us, but you must grasp by the blade."

"If you will make out for me a list of the authorities by which this may be established, I will get them and begin reading them to-night. What interests me, Mr. Courtenay, in your views, and strikes me as enveloping the true solution of a difficulty that has ever pressed upon my mind—with which I have struggled for years, and vainly—is the part which Reason plays—the meeting and reconciliation, if I may say so, of Liberty with Reverence. I have always held and said that Protestantism, as understood in England, is more a superstition than the most extreme Virgin-worship of Spain and Sicily; but you are truly Catholic, because you embrace with unfearing love all that is true, all that is beautiful, and all that speaks to the heart."

This was enough to kindle Herbert, who now threw himself out without reserve. From the contemplation of the Divine Triad, considered as a truth of Reason—or rather as the heavenly light in which Reason itself first learns to see—to the minutest points of ritual, he expatiated with eloquence and power. Occasionally, Clifford contributed a rapid formula, that condensed an argument into a phrase; or pointed out an analogy that illuminated the abyss of some spiritual mystery. And, in view of the beauty and sanctity of the Truth, which now rose before him, it seemed sacrilege to remember that the possession of Alice depended on his decision. Till his mind became thoroughly satisfied, he resolved that she should be to him as a dear sister.

"Let me now show you some of my curiosities," he said, as Mr. Courtenay rose to depart. "Lady Alice mentioned to me that you were fond of botany."

"Very."

"Well," said Clifford, opening a cabinet, "I have filled my herbals in every quarter of the globe."

CHAPTER IX.

At the same hour of the same bright morning on which Herbert Courtenay visited Frederick

Clifford, Lord Beauchamp's chariot rolled between the bronze valves of the court-yard gate of Lennox House, and his lordship descended at the principal entrance. He passed through the cruciform hall, with its mosaic and sculpture, up the staircase of marble and alabaster, to the octagon vestibule, now lighted by its dome of painted glass. Thence, the servant who preceded him led the way through the low-browed guard-room, bright with weapons and armor of the middle ages, and where a stately Highlander, in the Stuart tartan, made him a grave salute. Thence he passed into a brilliant cloister, surrounding the court of the new palace. It was in the early English style, with slender columns of cream-colored stone, and rich shadowy moldings, which the soft sunlight of this cloudless day rendered peculiarly effective. The pavement was a fanciful tile, of blue and amber, and the walls and groined ceilings were painted with an immense series of subjects, chiefly from the history of the first Testament, in imitation of the celebrated Bible of Raffaele. These decorations were not entirely finished. Lord Beauchamp had to pass under a scaffolding, where an artist was at work upon the vault. The court itself was planted as a garden, with a fountain of lions in the center. Looking on this dazzling corridor, was a long range of carved doors, and narrow latticed windows.

After proceeding rather more than half-way down one side, a door was thrown open, and he was ushered through one or two ante-rooms, into a lofty saloon—a saloon of many mirrors, and hung with rose-colored silk. It was lighted by a large window, of massive tracery, nearly veiled by clouds of muslin; and here, amid a wilderness of luxurious seats, were seated, each on an ottoman, two ladies. They were both embroidering, like ladies in the olden time: and it would appear that they had been singing as they worked, for, by an economical contrivance, a volume of music, large, of antique aspect, and written on vellum, was placed on a low stand before them.

It would appear that Lord Beauchamp was making calls that morning, for, after a stay of half an hour, in which really nothing was said from which Lady Alice Stuart could divine what was the motive of this visitor, or whether his visit was intended for herself or her little Clarie, on whom his eyes were almost constantly fixed, he bade them both good morning, and, regaining his carriage, ordered the coachman to drive to the ——— legation, No. —, Grosvenor-square.

"Her excellency is not at home," said the silver-maced Swiss, with a bow of infinite regret, and looking at the carriage and livery with a rapid professional glance of non-recognition. "I beg your lordship's pardon," added the same individual, with an instant change of expression to that of infinite satisfaction, as his eye fell on Lord Beauchamp's card. "Her excellency is at home to your lordship."

It was the family mansion of Lord Excester, which had been taken for the season by the ——— minister; Lord Beauchamp had not entered it since the day when he suffered Lady Blanche Courtenay to slip through his fingers, as Isabel Fitzgerald long ago related to Louise de Belmont. It is into the presence of the latter

that he is now admitted, and the quickened beat of his heart indicates pretty surely that he can not yet regard her with the tranquil indifference with which he now remembers Lady Blanche, or encounters the Countess of Waterborough.

Louise was in her boudoir, and alone. She welcomed him with her sweetest smile, and pressed his hand with warmth.

"And so you say that Mademoiselle Clair-voix is your sister?" said Augustus. "And she was one of the witnesses of my marriage—the friend of Maddalena, or, as you suggest, in her service. Maddalena, also, perpetually reminded me of you. To confess the truth, it was, in no slight degree—the secret of her charm."

"In what did she resemble me?" asked the countess, with sweetness. "The voice—manner—or what? for you say you did not see her face."

"She described to me even her face, as I should have described yours," said Augustus.

"You dwell too much on these things. You have had an experience of all that passion can give, and you have a reversion of happiness. Be content. You should have something to employ your energies. Why don't you refit Beauchamp House?"

"I like it better as it is."

"Then go to the Lords every night, and take part in the debates. You would be listened to, I assure you."

"Lord Lansdowne has my proxy, and I am no politician."

"London is full of poor—of beings in want of food, medicine, instruction, religious consolation, healthful dwellings;—of light, and cleanliness, and the space that even in poverty common decency requires, and without which purity can hardly exist. I have seen—I see it every day—Augustus. There are some of us leagued together in a holy conspiracy to remedy this state of things, which is a reproach to people—Christians, too—living, like us, in luxury and unlimited leisure. Here, no proxy can discharge our duties for us. Join us. You are nearly the richest, and certainly the least occupied, man in this great city. We have already considerable means, but we want more; and, above all, personal exertions on the part of the powerful are inestimable."

"You are right, Louise; this is the way for me to earn the right to be happy, if happy indeed I am ever to be."

"And find a present solace, if you require one," said the countess, coloring, "in my affection and society. Let me show you how you are remembered."

She opened a door which led into a bed-room, furnished with almost conventual simplicity. There was a narrow camp-bed without curtains, having a single mattress. Over the little *prie-dieu* at the head was a crucifix, carved in ivory, which had been his own gift. Over the chimney was the familiar portrait of Annunziata; his own—a small head in oil—hung on the wall opposite the bed. The devotional books on the table, some of which were illuminated, had all been his gifts. Her name was written in them, as she showed him, by his own hand. She now opened some drawers which contained the wardrobe of an infant. She took out some

articles of baby linen, beautifully wrought with the needle.

"I made all these things with my own hands," she said, the tears in her eyes.

But the most precious and sacred memento of all, she now took from a small casket of pure gold. In the lid was set the miniature of a beautiful infant; and in a case of white silk, delicately worked on the outside with flowers, reposed some tiny curling locks of a child's soft golden hair.

"My child's mother!" exclaimed Augustus. "I must fly from you, Louise, or my heart will be a traitor where its allegiance is now sworn."

But Louise de Belmont suddenly yet gently embraced him.

"It is I who will strengthen you in every noble resolution. Forgive this one embrace, which I owed to my child's father. We must not permit ourselves too much softness; we have both an expiation to accomplish—a victory to achieve. We will combat," she said, with a sweet smile, that recalled in a moment all his love and all her power, "we will combat side by side. To fly from each other would be a cowardly wisdom."

From that hour Lord Beauchamp sought the society of Louise as hitherto he had avoided it. He shared the works of energetic and systematized charity, in which she had invited his co-operation, but in which he was at first startled to find himself associated with members of the Church of England; for Alice and both her parents were active members of the conspiracy to which the countess had alluded. They spoke of it as such, because it was their principle to be secret in their benefactions, and, as a combination, never to appear. Clifford, when sounded by Louise as to his disposition to be one of them declined, saying that his time was at present wholly occupied with duties important as those of charity itself.

"What can be so important?" said Louise.

"Truth, without which there can be no true unity, and therefore no abiding love," said Frederick, with unwonted vehemence.

Meanwhile, the London season flew rapidly away, but, in order to understand the events by which its close affected the personages of this history, we must enter into a brief detail of circumstances which otherwise would be quite episodal.

When Clifford quitted Lady Alice in the conservatory, on the morning after the *fête* at Lennox House, she threw herself upon the sofa in the bower of Flora, to dry her tears, and, lulled by the murmur of the lotus-fountain, exhausted by fatigue, want of sleep, and so many emotions, she soon lost the sense of her pure though passionate agitation. She was discovered by the servant whose duty it was to extinguish the lamps; the steward was apprized of it, and Mademoiselle Clairvoix speedily arrived, to awaken her friend and mistress. She bent down and kissed her for that purpose.

"Frederick!" exclaimed Lady Alice, "still here!"

"It is I, dear Lady Alice."

"You embraced me," said Alice, confusedly. "I thought it was Frederick."

Clarinelle looked significantly at the steward who was present, and Alice too perceiving him,

blushed as she rose. In a few days after, this incident, in itself nothing, but not very agreeable to our heroine's delicacy to have repeated, was circulated in every drawing-room in London; and, with various modifications, inferences, and embellishments, of course, in every club; giving rise to a rumor that found its way even into the Sunday newspapers. Necessarily, the very great and inexcusable fault of mentioning to third persons what they had witnessed and heard, lay between Matson, the steward, and Alice's young favorite. Clarie protested that she had not breathed a syllable of it to any one living, not so much as to her sister. Matson, who was the next thing to a gentleman, and quite one in appearance, protested the same thing. Clarie was overwhelmed. The duke, inflexibly just, refused to dismiss the steward, of whose culpable indiscretion there was no proof. Alice adhered to her favorite, and appealed, through Louise de Schönberg to Frederick, to find out, by some means, how this tittle-tattle had found its way, as it had, into the very highest circles first. The most disagreeable part of the rumor, which gained a certain credence, necessarily in very ill-informed circles, was that which represented her as having followed the example of her sister Edith, in marrying, or at least engaging herself, secretly without her parents' consent. However, not a contradiction of any sort did the ducal family vouchsafe. Lady Alice pursued her rides and other amusements; was a trifle less expansive and sympathetic perhaps; a good deal more followed. A greater crowd gathered round her portrait in the Royal Academy; a more uninterrupted fire of opera-glasses was directed to her mother's box in Her Majesty's Theater: that was all. But Clifford told his mother and sister, that Lady Alice had refused him; quite uninfluenced by her parents, he was very sure. He could not well explain why, or hint that Lady Alice was attached to him all the same; and Lady Beauchamp did not like it—Grace Clifford was very indignant.

Inclination, as much as a sense of decorum, had led this mother and daughter to avoid general society during the season, which now began to wane. Grace shrank haughtily back from the competition of the matrimonial market. She regarded herself as the most nobly descended girl in England, and certainly deemed the most exalted rank her due, but, for that very reason she would not have crossed the room to secure the homage of a prince. Alice Stuart thought Grace was very right; and, very desirous as she was of having Frederick Clifford's sister for her friend, indulged at the same time a romance that blended Grace's destinies with those of her own brother, and she even imparted this fancy, sister-like, to Lord Stratherne himself. This young nobleman—at this time not quite of age—came to London on occasion of the annoying rumor we have mentioned, became intimate with Clifford (to Alice's great delight), and enamored of Clifford's sister—a singularly pale girl, with delicate red lips, liquid hazel eyes, and dark straight hair, of which she possessed a most extraordinary quantity. Now, let us see how this romance of our heroine's succeeded.

The brother of Alice was a youth who had lost the beauty of boyhood, without having yet

gained that of many years. Tall as the valiant son of Kish, and with a well-knit frame of corresponding proportions, he would have been an ugly customer, as they say, to encounter in a fair fight, but, in a drawing-room, cut a sorry figure by the side of the graceful Lord Wessex; a thing that grieved Alice much. And Grace Clifford thought she owed Lady Alice a turn for refusing her brother; perhaps, felt some natural triumph at the opportunity of returning so exactly the compliment. Nevertheless, Alice cultivated perseveringly the society of Miss Clifford, who appeared in public generally under the wing of Isabel, Lady Devereux. The Marquis of Wessex and the young Earl of Stratherne, were the constant cavaliers of this lovely trio, and Lord Devereux also hung about his wife with jealous attention. Isabel was still beautiful, but wasted; and rouged slightly at four-and-twenty. She was very discreet in her conduct, but her feelings were under no great command, and she betrayed at times a jealousy of Lord Wessex's attention to her cousin Grace, which shocked Alice, though the latter, in one point of view, sympathized with it deeply.

Alice could not bear the idea of Grace Clifford's throwing herself away on such a man. She watched her former admirer with great jealousy, and, comparing him with the thoroughly estimable people she had known, and with her own lofty ideals, there was scarcely a thing he said or did that did not displease her. She had a thousand minds to tell Grace the Chamouni story, or get Louise to tell it her.

CHAPTER X.

THE moonlight slept in the court of Lennox House. The slender columns threw their defined shadows on the painted walls and tiled pavement of the two illumined sides of the cloisters. Of the four spouting lions of the fountain in the center of the court, two poured forth streams of sparkling silver foam, and two of dusky white. Throughout that vast place, the household, numerous as a garrison, were at rest, or seemed so, except that a solitary watchman, shod in felt, moved through the galleries and arcades with a quiet, measured step. Thus he now paced the circuit of the cloister. All was quiet, and he turned into the low-browed and dimly-lighted guard-room. Four Highlanders slept, in their plaids, on low forms covered with red leather. They are not awakened by that stealthy step. The watch passes on to the vestibule, looks down into the cruciform hall, and then paces on through the peopled length of the sculpture gallery. Marble god and goddess, nymph and faun, the triumphing emperor, in sword and tunic, and the undulating forms of female modesty, veiled in the graceful peplus, successively brighten and pass into shadow, as he moves with his lantern between their motionless ranks.

As the watch disappeared from the guard-room, a door that looked upon the moonlit cloister was cautiously opened, and two females came out. They were enveloped in mantles and hoods, and it appeared that their sole object was to enjoy the unwonted beauty of the night.

After about a quarter of an hour, during which they remained in silence, standing near a column, a man came out of the same shadowed side of the quadrangle below, and crossed the court. Here, in the opposite, illumined side, he unlocked a door and passed out; but ere he did so, turned his head and gave a hasty glance up the cloister. He could not but perceive the two females, though indistinctly, but his features, on which the moonlight fell, were distinctly visible to them.

"'Tis Matson. That door is a private exit. What would I give to know where he is going!"

But Matson was observed without as well as within. When he emerged from the wicket in the great door of the covered carriage-way, once more his person and features were distinguished. An individual on the opposite, or park, side of Piccadilly, followed the steward, at a distance, but keeping him constantly in view. By Piccadilly and Grosvenor-place, and Chapel-street, the steward wended, and was finally admitted, with some mystery, at the servant's entrance of one of the largest houses in Belgravia, in the neighborhood of the square. It was about two o'clock in the morning. A young man, apparently a servant out of livery, preceded him up a stair obviously intended for the use of domestics. Arrived at the first floor, he was left, for a moment, in a sort of lobby, and then introduced, by a narrow passage, into a sumptuously-furnished apartment, having the air of a lady's boudoir. It was lighted by a chandelier with rich cut glass shades, and enlivened by a fire. On a couch of blue silk reclined a lady. The servant placed a chair for Mr. Matson, and withdrew.

The lady was a perfect blonde, with large light-blue eyes, and a glossy abundance of the lightest light-brown hair, which was simply arranged. She was, obviously, tall, a showy figure, and, possessed a beautiful hand. She had evidently been sleeping, and her well-cut eyelid, with its fringe of long blonde lashes, gave, as it drooped, an expression of softness to her delicate features; but the eye itself, at once bright and wandering, pained you by its unsteady glare. Her high black silk dress, cut in a very narrow V, and trimmed with very delicate lace, enhanced the fairness of her complexion. A black ribbon that encircled her well-formed white throat, and which was fastened by a diamond cross, added to this effect. In her hand was a rosary of pearls.

"You did well to come, Mark," she said.

"Your message was so imperative that I had no choice. But, notwithstanding my precaution in taking this hour, I was observed in leaving the house."

"You will be found out at last," said the lady, with a peculiar smile. "Were I not sure of it, I should be tempted to give you up. Clifford has traced the reports to me; nothing is wanted but the link between us. He will not want it long, for he is never baffled in what he seriously undertakes."

"We shall see that."

"I suppose that you were vexed with me, Mark," continued the lady in a voice of artificial sweetness, "for letting that fly as gossip, which you gave me as a secret. I confess it tended to compromise you; but I hoped it would commit

your charming young mistress with Clifford, so far as to render their union inevitable, in spite of an opposition which it seems does not exist. This, again, would be contrary to your hopes, but I can't help it, my dear Mark, if our ends are diametrically opposite; and yours are pure extravagance."

"It was not merely to tell me this that you sent for me, I suppose, Augusta," said Matson, folding his arms and stretching out his feet toward the fire. The lady counted the beads of her rosary round before she replied.

"No. It is this affair of my brother and his sister, about which I want your advice and aid. The fair Clifford is fairly won. So Wessex himself tells me. She has referred him to her parents, and at present his policy is to protract the negotiation with the latter, till his mortal enemies, the Stuart and the Schönberg, are gone to Scotland. Now I doubt whether they have really the power to injure him with his mistress or her friends; or, if they have, whether they will use it. Lady Alice has delicacy, and Louise is forgiving. They won't interfere, or, if they do, their interference may fail. I want something more sure."

"You can't prevent your brother marrying if he is determined upon it," said Matson, with gravity. "If it is not this woman, it will be another."

"I differ with you," said Augusta, energetically. "Wessex does not care for Grace Clifford. The more dazzling qualities of Alice Stuart still enslave his fastidious passions, and her hostility to him (as he describes it) only stimulates them the more. What he really wants is revenge. If he were disappointed in this amiable design, he would rush upon some violent expedient, such as he found successful once before."

"I know a means," said Matson, phlegmatically, "of effectually balking your brother in this affair, and, if you like, by the instrumentality of Lady Alice."

"That is precisely what I want," said Augusta.

"When I was in the service of the late Lord Stratherne, I became acquainted with many circumstances—that, in short, I could communicate to Lady Alice; but they would not only put Wessex in her power, they would be destructive of the hopes which you term chimerical, but which I do not regard as such."

"Mark," said Augusta, "you are not really such a fool as to entertain an idea of that sort; but I can tell you a plan which might succeed. Lash Wessex into fury by defeating him in his present purpose just as he fancies it attained; then push him on to try again the scheme which answered so well with a meaner object in view; then turn the execution of it, which of course he will intrust to you, as before, to your own account. Come, that is a sisterly counsel."

While these amiable confederates were discussing their plans, Alice Stuart was still talking in whispers to Clarie Clairvoix, and the high-riding moon glassed itself in the basin of the fountain in the court of her father's palace. But at length the bright eastern limb of the luminary entered behind a vast, spreading, and impenetrable cloud, and in another minute the whole orb was obscured. Then the lady and

her friend withdrew to their bower. The morning came, and brought from Frederick Clifford a note, which occasioned the dismissal of Matson. The steward, before leaving the house, demanded and obtained an audience of Lady Alice; and when, afterward, the latter recalled Clarinelle to her presence, the young Frenchwoman found her beautiful mistress most unusually excited; her countenance flushed with indignant passion, and her eyes flowing with indignant tears.

CHAPTER XI.

THE expiring season rallied in a last effort. The Marquis of Wessex was to give a ball, which should surpass all balls, always excepting that at Lennox House. That had been necessarily unique, like Lennox House itself, or the peerless beauty of the Duke of Lennox's dazzling daughter.

Wessex House, too, was magnificent in its way. What gold and satin could do for it, they had done; and art, if it had not contributed much to interest the imagination, had unquestionably added to the material gorgeousness of rooms than which few in London were lighted up with a more imposing effect. On this occasion, too, the gardens were to be illuminated and adorned in the oriental fashion, and the supper was to be served in a magnificent Moorish pavilion, erected at their extremity. For, to give greater *éclat*, this was to be a fancy ball, to represent the time when the court of the caliphs of Grenada was the most sumptuous and chivalrous in the world. The mingling of the most diverse costumes was thus to be at once picturesque and correct. Gothic Spain and feudal Europe, the free Peninsular Jew, and the Greek of the Lower Empire, the Arab and Seljuk, and Hindoo, the brother, and ally, and subject of the Caliphate might here, without a very violent improbability, be assembled.

The heart of the lord of this festivity beat high as the brilliant crowd thronged into his saloons, blazing with an illumination that might rival the fierce sunlight of Andalusia. The names of the noble and powerful sounded in his ear; the multitude bowed before him with a sense of being honored even to be his guests; the highest advanced with the friendly and courteous bearing of equals. Who would dare to beard him in the midst of all that grandeur, or, daring, could do so with impunity or success? It had been settled that his projected alliance with one of the most illustrious and potent families should be announced to-night; and if he had contemplated this decisive step with some nervousness, he was now sustained by the idea that a declaration of the sort made opposition difficult and ungracious, while it rendered a retraction of the engagement, on the part of the lady and her friends, nearly impossible. And then, the intoxicating influence of success up to a certain point, bore down the recollection of isolated defeats, and made him forget the pledges he had given to a terrible law of retribution—pledges which, like those contracted with the powers of darkness, must be redeemed in their season.

By a capital suggestion, to avoid the oriental robes, which, on Englishmen, to say truth, always appear a somewhat undignified travesty, the marquis and some of his friends had imagined an embassy from the knights templars to the court of the caliphs, and it was in the well-known costume of this famous order that some twenty young men of rank this night figured. In white cap and crimson plume, the white, red-crossed mantle gracefully depending from his shoulders, the marquis advanced through the parting throng to welcome with peculiar courtesy a party whose appearance always made a sensation. It was the sovereigns of the isle which Cœur de Lion bestowed on the house of Lusignan, that seemed to approach. The golden-haired Duke of Lennox, with a jeweled circlet in his crimson cap of state, looked like the Norman prince of an eastern conquest of Christendom; the duchess, in a vest at once regal and classic, seemed worthy to be a queen of Cyprus. But the oval countenance and heroic stature of Lord Stratherne, in the costume of Epirus, aptly represented the indomitable George Castriot; and on the arm of Scanderbeg leaned a Grecian princess, whose dress we may venture more particularly to describe.

The hair of Alice Stuart was filleted with gems, but its unbraided luxuriance flowed upon her shoulders, as in her girlhood. The gems—ruby and emerald, and many a brilliant—confined a vail like a starry mist. Over a chemise of like transparent quality, a vest of light yellow and gold silk, fitting to the shape, was buttoned down the front with diamonds, as far as the scarf of tissue bound loosely round her flowing form; then it opened, to discover the full trowsers of the Archipelago, of gold and crimson in a spiral stripe. The upper vest, or pelisse, with short open sleeves, was of violet and silver brocade. The necklace, bracelets, and anklets, worn by Alice, as portion of this costume, were of brilliants; and, to complete its accuracy, the ringed and taper fingers, which would have become the daughter of a Serail, were unprofaned by a glove, while her soft, rose-dappled instep played, with a charming security, in a pink slipper, ornamented with gems to match those which flashed in the folds of her vail.

"Your lordship has chosen an ominous character," said Lady Alice. "Had fictitious personages been permitted," she added, "Courtenay should have been your Ivanhoe."

The marquis changed color at this address, but she made him a reverence, and passed on to greet Grace Clifford, who wore a costume the exact counterpart of her own.

"'Tis fated that we appear to-night as sisters," said the loveliest of the two beauties.

"My dress was designed for me by Fred," said Miss Clifford, with some embarrassment.

"And mine by Courtenay. The coincidence, if intended, was planned by our brothers;—my heart tells me that it is prophetic, in spite of a rumor, which whispers that I am to congratulate you to-night on a different destiny."

"I was not aware that it was known to any one yet," said Grace.

"That which can not, must not, *shall* not be," said Alice, in a whisper, "can not be known to any one, of course."

More and more astonished, really startled, Miss Clifford, by her look, demanded an explanation, but Alice had already turned away, and even Lord Stratherne, whose arm she had regained, moved on with a slight, distant bow.

Alice was seeking Clifford, but she was perpetually arrested in her progress through the rooms. She was solicited also to dance, and, however disinclined, could as little refuse as a sovereign can decline the burdensome ceremonies of presentation. She thought, however, that she must necessarily encounter him in the ball-room; she always did. At last she became anxious, because at supper was to be made the announcement which, if possible, she wished to prevent. She feared that he was not coming to the ball. She sent Edward St. Liz and Frank Cavendish both in search of him. They reported that he had just arrived, and was talking to Lady Fitzjames, but would obey her commands. In effect, Clifford, almost at the same instant, appeared.

With the noble yet wise frankness which placed every thing that Lady Alice did above suspicion, she immediately said, that she had a communication of importance to make to him. He led her into the gardens, which were filled with promenaders, but where one could tell a story without being overheard. She related, with perfect simplicity, the affair of Chamouni, and then the history (which we suppress) communicated by Matson. The latter, she said, remained to verify, and this task she thought devolved most suitably on him.

"It requires a man, too, to deal with Lord Wessex, and in every point of view, as Grace's brother and Isabel's cousin—"

"It was fittest that you should confide this affair to me. You were quite right, dear Alice; but you have told me nothing that I did not know when I entered this house; though I did not know or imagine that you knew it. I was just considering, in some perplexity, what was best to be done. It is a matter of extreme delicacy."

"But the delicacy must not prevent our acting with decision," said Alice, with one of her characteristic looks of blended sweetness and spirit.

Clifford was aware that Alice had of late avoided him. The daily increasing tenderness for him, of which she was very conscious, and which ran as an under current beneath all her apparent preoccupations of a different kind, made her doubt her own firmness, should an opportunity again occur (which he seemed to seek) of pleading his love. Frederick, on the other hand, as he observed her notice of him become daily more slight and constrained, one while feared that she was succeeding too well in overcoming an attachment that she deemed herself not permitted to indulge, at other times ventured to read the signs of affection growing into passion in her brief and tremulous greetings. But he was now distinctly conscious, from her soft yet animated look, that Alice was in one of those moods, to which all are sometimes liable, when women yield easily to the persuasions of love. The peculiar confidence they had just exchanged, the fantastic gayety of the scene, their own strange garb, the inevitable reaction of strong feelings long suppressed, all swelled a

stream of innocent and natural impulses difficult to stem, and which swept away, almost irresistibly, the resolves formed in moments of heightened moral enthusiasm.

They formed their plan. Alice submitted, with affectionate eagerness to every thing that Clifford suggested. They returned to the ball-room, where their absence had caused many speculations. They seemed to return with a purpose of gayety. They danced. Clifford, like his friend, Lord Stratherne, was in the Albanian costume. Imagine the Apollo, in a gold-embroidered velvet jacket, and kilt of white silk. All eyes were fixed on this dazzling pair. Seldom such faces and forms have met. It was like the conjunction of the two effulgent planets—Zeus and Aphrodite, shining together in the House of Life—beautiful but ominous! The apparent surrender of herself by Alice to the enjoyment of the hour, allayed the apprehension which her first address that evening had excited in the mind of Lord Wessex. And now, her loveliness, the enthusiastic praises of which were constantly in his ear, and her love for Clifford, which was hardly less observed, nearly distracted him at once with passion and jealousy. It was no longer innocent impulses that Lord Wessex was unable to resist; by indulging the intemperate wishes of youth, he had lost utterly the power of self-mastery; and, by the universal consequence of vice, the strongest motives of self-love could no longer restrain him from seeking, by every means, whatever he coveted.

The hour of the banquet arrived. On a dais, at the upper end of the pavilion, and under a canopy, a selected number of guests of the highest rank, surrounded a table graced by the presence of royalty. The jealousy partly, and partly the anxiety of Lord Wessex, had contrived that Lady Alice should be in this eminent circle. Grace Clifford was significantly honored with a place next the princess of the blood, whose lips were first to hail her as the future mistress of the palace where they feasted. A chivalrous dignity, of which Lord Wessex had a high sense, marked these arrangements, by which he paid homage to a family whose alliance was a new source of splendor even to him. On Alice's right was Lady Devereux.

"Do you know that my cousin Grace is affianced to our host?"

"I know it; and I know also why Lady Devereux can not mention the report without a grief that her assumed gayety ill conceals."

Isabel gave Lady Alice a frightened look.

"Yes. I know the secret which that man so infamously abuses. But do not fear. It is safe with me. Not even to punish him will I betray it."

Isabel's figure bent like a broken flower. Her temples and her neck were suffused with the crimson tide of her shame.

"Save Grace, and expose me if it be necessary," she murmured.

"Your cousin Frederick answers for his sister," said Alice, with a slight blush.

"Ah! I should have told him long ago. He, also, loved your brother, Lady Alice."

"Answer me one question, Isabel. Your husband—?"

"Knows all. It is as much for his sake as

my own, that I have struggled to conceal from the world an unfaithfulness with which he has never reproached me. It is true that he does not possess the right—he had deserted me."

The countenance of Alice had gradually become more and more flushed; but she now gave Lady Devereux a glance of deep and tender pity.

"As Ludovic's sister, I shall always love you and pray for you."

"Angel!" said Isabel.

"The whispers of Lady Devereux, and your blushes, Lady Alice, seem to intimate a tender theme," said Lord Wessex.

"Yes! a theme that I have seldom discussed, even with one of my own sex."

"There are circumstances which set loose the tongues of the most reserved."

"True. When the weak are oppressed, and the happiness of the innocent is at stake, the most modest woman may be bold without censure," said Alice.

Lady Devereux looked down, and the marquis grew pale. As he turned away, with a bow of affected carelessness, he encountered the bright and steady eye of Frederick Clifford. He fled from that glance, and met that of his betrothed, hardly less tranquil, but haughty and coldly inquiring. Such was the temper in which both parties met the congratulations that presently poured upon them. The news, which had already been whispered, flew in an authoritative shape along the merry tables. It was an event of no slight importance. Miss Clifford, having been just brought out, was considered a most fortunate young lady. The happy lover, however, was fortifying himself with repeated draughts of wine. What followed, we must relate with as much simplicity as possible.

Naturally, after supper, the dancing recommenced with greater animation than ever. Madame de Schönberg, Alice, and Clarinelle were entreated to repeat their *pas de trois*, which, at Lennox House, had been so much admired. It was more than ever applauded. All seemed gay except the lord of the feast and his intended bride. Grace, unalterably composed, but grave, observed Lord Wessex with pertinacity. He danced with her, but, after a few turns, she complained of fatigue, and proposed that he should, take out Lady Alice. The latter accepted the offer unhesitatingly. Miss Clifford, seating herself by Isabel Devereux, followed them round the ball-room with her eyes.

"How Miss Clifford looks at us!" said Alice.

"Is she jealous of you, do you think?"

"I defest her," said Lord Wessex, vehemently.

"And yet you are engaged to be married. I suppose you pretended to love her when you obtained her consent?"

"She is an icicle; and, if she were not, you know, as well as if I assured you of it a hundred times a day, that I love you always, to adoration. Oh, Lady Alice, let me lead you for a few moments to the gardens, as I did to the Prince Santisola's terrace, and tell you how I love you. Hear me this once, and pity and forgive me, if you can."

"I will go with you to the garden, willingly," said Alice; "but I warn you, that my compli-

ance proceeds from no friendliness to you. It is an enemy that you love."

Miss Clifford immediately rose, and, with Isabel Devereux, regardless of what people would say, followed the marquis and Lady Alice into the illuminated gardens. The walks were spread with carpets, and here and there was placed a silken divan. Curiosity, and some expectation of a scene, led out many others. At the bottom of a walk, Lady Alice seated herself by a little table prepared for refreshments. The marquis stood, and talked in an imploring tone. Grace and Lady Devereux approached, and Lady Fitzjames, leaning on the arm of Frederick Clifford, at the same moment drew near. The marquis paused, and turned round fiercely at the intruders.

Lady Alice extended her hand to Miss Clifford. "Come and sit by me, my dear Grace," she said, calmly. "You will allow me to call you so, I trust. Lord Wessex, who has this night been spoken of as your accepted lover, makes me here a declaration of attachment, and offers to break off his engagement with you in my favor."

"It is quite needless," said Grace, haughtily, "to add any more. He but anticipates a resolution I had already formed."

"I sincerely congratulate you," said Alice, earnestly, and drawing her with a gentle violence down by her side. "I sincerely congratulate you on such a resolution; for this behavior of his to yourself sufficiently proves that he is a man whose passions neither prudence, nor principle, nor honor, nor decency, nor kind feeling, can in the slightest degree control. I narrowly escaped marrying him once, and now you. We are matched in fate; let us be sisters in affection, as I hope we shall one day be by affinity."

Grace buried her face in the bosom of Lady Alice. Frederick Clifford touched Lord Wessex on the shoulder. The marquis, stupefied at the result, followed him mechanically.

Lord Beauchamp and Madame de Schönberg sate together, in the most retired cabinet of the long suite of state apartments. Each wore a rich Venetian habit, and the domino and mask which the patricians of both sexes always assumed in public, lay on the sofa near them; but Louise held her mask in her hand. This costume—the sole disguise in all the saloons—had excited general curiosity in the earlier part of the evening. Its adoption—by no means preconcerted, but easily accounted for—was the occasion of converting into certainty a startling suspicion, for some time harbored, though unconfessed, by Augustus Clifford.

"You were only wrong, dear Louise, or Maddalena (for you say both names are really yours), in supposing that I would not have consented freely to such a postponement of our happiness as my neglect, and your precipitancy, had rendered inevitable. I must go to St. Omer again, and redeem the years that may elapse ere our reunion, in a profitable penance."

A step sounded in the next saloon. Louise sprang from the sofa, and the hand that tenderly held hers, to the window. The door stood ajar. Lord Beauchamp went to it. A man of gentlemanlike and foreign appearance was there, and a servant in Lord Wessex's livery, who threw

open the door. The latter inquired if the Countess Schönberg were in this room.

"Why, who wants her?"

"An accident has happened to Count Schönberg," said the foreigner, "and we have been unable to find her excellency. I should have thought that she had left the ball, but her carriage being still in the street—"

Here, Madame de Schönberg advancing, the speaker stopped and bowed.

"What's the matter, prince?"

The thing was again explained. The countess desired his highness, an *attaché* of the legation, to call her carriage, and, taking Lord Beauchamp's arm, followed him immediately.

The company were retiring. There was confusion; much talking, a crowd on the stairs and in the hall. At first their way was impeded; but some gentlemen perceived Madame de Schönberg. There was a whisper—

"It is his wife."

"Make way."

"Allow Madame de Schönberg to pass."

A path was opened; all eyes fixed on her as she passed through. Her husband felt the arm tremble that was placed in his. "Let us hope that 'tis a trifle," he said, with generous feeling.

As the crowd closed round them, various remarks passed from one to another. Many, in such a throng, even in such a house, did not know her even by sight.

"How beautiful she is!"

"She will marry again, no doubt."

"Oh, no doubt."

"Who was that with her?"

"Her cousin, Lord Beauchamp."

"Oh! is that Earl Beauchamp?"

"No! a much greater man, Lord Beauchamp de Glentworth."

They reached the carriage. Lord Beauchamp handed her in, and, arresting the movement of the chasseur who was about to whirl up the steps, whispered in the ear of the *attaché*, who replied in the same tone.

Lord Beauchamp was deeply moved, and at first irresolute. "I think," he said, after an instant's hesitation, "that it should be told her at once."

"Where is Mademoiselle Clairvoix?" demanded Madame de Schönberg, leaning forward.

"She went home with his excellency after the accident. She was with him when it happened," said the prince.

"Why do we not get off then?" said the countess, impatiently.

"The carriage indeed must not stop the way," said Lord Beauchamp. "Prince, let us get in, if her excellency will be so good as to waive ceremony, under the circumstances."

The interior of the carriage was lighted. Lord Beauchamp, murmuring an apology to the prince, took his place by the countess, and, taking her hand, as the horses went off at a grand pace, said—

"My dear Louise, Count Schönberg is dead."

Let us now return to see how the other affair ended.

The house itself was not empty; but half a dozen young men were gathered in the Moorish pavilion. The servants had been excluded, and

the jealousies that looked into the gardens closed. The white costumes of three Templars, and the rich oriental dresses of the others, seemed more than the gay travesty of a modern ball-room, as the keen blades of swords, drawn for a deadly purpose, gleamed in the light of the branches and lusters.

"It is I who demand satisfaction of his lordship," said Frederick Clifford, looking round, "but all will observe that the choice of weapons is his."

Lord Wessex was well aware that Clifford could split a bullet upon a pen-knife. His lordship was one of the best fencers in Europe. There was a bright flashing before the eyes, and a sharp ringing of steel on the ear, and the sword of Lord Wessex flew from his hand.

Thrice the marquis was disarmed. Clifford put up his sword and spoke again, calmly as before—

"You will bear witness, gentlemen, that I decline proceeding further, because I can not run a man through the body in cool blood."

"This is too much," said Lord Wessex.

"But you must put up with it, though," said Frank Cavendish, who was his second. "We must all agree that Mr. Clifford has been very forbearing."

In his own room, after dismissing his valet, the marquis took out his pistol-case, charged one of the arms, and applied the muzzle to his forehead. It was wrested from him by a powerful hand:

"Is this your revenge?" said Matson.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER FROM FREDERICK CLIFFORD TO HERBERT COURTENAY.

"Glentworth Castle, December 2, 1842.

"MY DEAR MR. COURTENAY—Yes, I am convinced that the position of the Roman communion in England is untenable. On every principle of ecclesiastical and canon law, this is what I have long since been compelled to admit. The specious idea of a progressive development of Christianity, on which my friend Mr. N—— so much relies, I saw at once to be delusive. He inverts the old Roman pyramid, and builds the infallibility of the Church on the newly-invented piles of rationalism, driven into the quicksand of historical criticism. How determine that the Virgin-worship of modern Italy is a legitimate consequence of the doctrine of the incarnation, and the Pantheism of modern Germany its destruction? Of course, I don't mean to class these together! but I say that the devotion of Catholics, for the last 1200 years, to our Blessed Lady a devotion cherished in the immutable East no less ardently than in the obedient West, needs not a defense that identifies it with the impieties of Strauss and Hegel.

"It is on higher, and yet humbler, more practical grounds, that I have, for some time, hesitated as to the mission, not of the English Church (I make no doubt of that), but of the communion in which I was baptized; whether, though irregular and anomalous, it might not be justified by the manifest defects of the Reformed Church. I suppose that I am in the position, very nearly, of those who, in the English Church, are on the point of a secession to the Church of Rome. The ideas of a Priesthood and a Cult, of transmitted Authority from Heaven, of human Mediation in the communication of divine grace, of the Sacramental vehicles of spiritual virtues, of Sacrifice and its efficacy, and the power of the Keys, the use of Ceremonies, and the sanctity of Time and Place—all these seem to me, not only revealed and handed down, but reasonable, and supported as much by infinite analogies of nature, and facts of history, as those more elementary principles of religion which the Deist rejects and which your great Bishop Butler so unanswerably defended.

"In wanting the practice of confession, I have said to myself, Does not the Church of England practically want the pastoral office? Is not the Episcopos of St. Paul reduced to a Sunday orator? And is not the conduct of those who fly from a Church so negligent of its functions, however unjustifiable that conduct may be in theory, yet practically free from the imputation of schism?

"Again, you and I are convinced, not as a matter of beautiful theory, but practically, by a deep experience, that Ceremonies are the spiritualization of the external world, and the sustenance—the daily bread—of that faith which looks to things unseen. For example, such a thing as lights upon the altar, is to us no affair of ecclesiastical and ritual taste. What a difference between the *performance* of the Church service by one of your cathedral choirs—say in that Mausoleum of our faith, St. Paul's, apparently for the amusement of the persons present, and the solemn chanting of vespers by a few monks before an altar where some feebly-burning tapers intimate a reference to an unseen Presence and a local sanctity! In the one case we have the presence of men, and, at best, all is judged of by its tendency to edify; in the other, we stand before Him who dwelt between the cherubim, we bow before the place of His feet. It is no longer a performance, but a rite:—'Our prayer is set forth in His sight as the Incense, and the lifting up of our hands is an evening Sacrifice.'

"But, my dear Mr. Courtenay, except in your privileged chapels, whose peculiar rights you have explained, where, in the Church of England, is realized that divine idea of visible and audible worship which gathered the thoughts of Israel around the ancient temple? Is it not most true that the bigotry and superstitious intolerance of your people, fostered by your clergy, supported by the rulers of the Church, refuse, even to those who would appreciate it, the consoling influence of such a service? The most human of all human inventions in religion, the chilling negation of a Protestant ritual, is the Procrustean measure of Catholic devotion; while that reverent Science of the holy and beautiful, which made all things

after the pattern showed it in the mount—which ordained the worship of the Church, that is, after the heavenly model—is fanatically banished.

"What, then, is the ground on which, at last, I quit a communion whose legitimate, whose sole defense, in my judgment, is, that it is a struggle to preserve these immemorial peculiarities of the Catholic religion—these sacred rights—these inalienable privileges of the Catholic Christian, of which no synod and no parliament has a right to deprive us? It is this—that to preserve intact universal rites might be legitimate resistance to an overstrained provincial authority; but to make their observance, and the renunciation of the provincial Church, a condition of communion, is aggravated schism. We may communicate at your altars, but *you* may not at ours. We exclude you, as the Judaizers excluded the Gentiles. We are Romanizers; and, unless communion with the chair of Peter be not only lawful, but, as we have claimed, necessary, we are schismatics. I am bound to enter your ancient fold, by the law of Christian charity, which is paramount to all others. There, if some things are yet wanting, some things not yet set in order, it is our true work, in our measure, and according to the knowledge and ability that God gives, to supply, to restore, to reconstruct. The earthly Sion ever decays; and ever spring, out of her very desolations, those 'who build the old waste places, who shall raise up again the foundations of many generations;' and Sion herself 'shall ever be called the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in.'

"If I have been long in arriving at a conclusion which you have so often and so clearly pointed out as inevitable, it is that I have peculiar reasons for distrusting the convictions of my mind in regard to the point at issue; and I have endeavored to test their fairness as well as their firmness, by time. I believe that I should have long since avowed my change of sentiment, were it not recommended to me by personal motives so strong, that I may well be suspicious of their influence.

"Please to keep still the secret of our correspondence, and of my—conversion. How strange the word looks and sounds! Here, it is quite unsuspected, and, as I wish to keep it so, I mean to make my first communion in the Church of England at St. Valerie, where I hope I shall enjoy your kind assistance in duly preparing for it. The prospect of receiving, for the first time, the unmutated gift of Christ, fills me with a mingled joy and awe, such as I will not venture to more than hint at.

"I shall write to the duchess by this post, begging her permission to pay my long-promised visit, and if she graciously accord it, I shall be with you ere the holidays fairly begin.

"As ever, most affectionately and gratefully yours,

"F. CLIFFORD."

CHAPTER II.

THE autumn was spent by our friends somewhat as follows. The Duke and Duchess of Lennox went to Scotland, as usual, in August,

for a residence of two months, and Lady Alice accompanied her parents. Louise was to have been her friend's guest, but, in consequence of the death of Count Schönberg, retired to Clifford Grove, Frederick's seat, near Glentworth, which he placed at her disposal, and whither Clarinelle accompanied her sister. The latter and Alice incessantly corresponded, and it may be believed that the situation of her friend excited, in a mind so thoughtful and so full of genial sympathies, a great many reflections, which, however, she kept to herself. To a soul like that of Alice, nurtured on the hope of immortality, whatever is temporary and illusive was abhorrent. Even in the state in which all should be as the angels, she thought there would be some souls gentler than others, and whose permanent peculiarity it should be, to trust, and be guided by, their celestial fellows. Alice had given up, at least she thought she had, the hope of being united to Frederick in this world. Yet this was really very hard. Here was a heart, which she, first of all her sex, had had power to soften, but whose devotion, rejected by herself, now that it was once awakened, might perhaps attach itself to another. Generous as she was, against a thought so painful, her soul seemed powerless. But here follows the last of Alice's own letters; simple enough, but, considered as the last, not without an affecting interest—

"I was so sorry, my dear friend, not to be able, when we were at Beauvoir, to run over to Clifford Grove and see you. But, besides the risk of meeting its master, the day could really not be spared. Four country houses had we 'done,' on our way from Scotland, and the promised fortnight in Leicestershire dwindled to a week; you see, it was impossible. I was out thrice in that week with the duke's hounds; the last being the most brilliant meet, I was assured, known for years: and his grace politely intimated that the honor I had done the county in appearing in a scarlet coat was the cause. I believe him—don't you?

"Mamma has just received a letter from him to say that he is coming to make the Christmas visit promised last year, and we expect him in a week at furthest. To think that we shall be, perhaps, a month under the same roof! I shrink from such a trial, which I think he ought to spare me. And yet, dearest Louise, how my heart builds hopes on so slight a foundation!

"I have an incident to relate that will interest Clarie. Antoinette's honesty is above suspicion; her care of my wardrobe is beyond reproach. Indeed, I have to thank Clarie, as for many things, so for getting me such a treasure. Well, she comes to me yesterday, with a long face, and a longer list of things inexplicably missing. They have not been lost in the laundry, for, for example, one of the stolen articles is that beautiful fancy riding-habit I wore at —, last month, and which I wrote you almost a letter about. This robbery must have been effected the day after our arrival at our winter home, a fortnight since. Antoinette fell asleep in my room, that day, in the evening, after drinking some very bitter black coffee (her after-dinner habit), and the keys (which at no other time have quitted her possession) must have been then abstracted from her pocket by some one who took

that opportunity for taxing my wardrobe at leisure.

"Apparently, somebody desires specimens of my apparel, with a view of getting up a wardrobe entirely similar. But with what ulterior motive? I can not even conjecture. Kiss Clarie for me a thousand times, and remember in your orisons,

"Your affectionate,

"ALICE STUART."

This letter was post-marked "St. Walerie, Dec. 5:" and was addressed to "Madame la Comtesse de Schönberg, Clifford Grove, near Glentworth, —shire." That which follows, from the Duchess of Lennox, may throw more light on Alice's state of mind at this juncture.

St. Walerie, Dec. 7, 1842.

"DEAR EDITH—I wish you and George would try to get here as soon as you can. Your father wants to see his grandson, and I want you on account of Alice. I don't mean her health; that never was better. The sun and air—all this riding, boating, and bathing—have only rendered her complexion more brilliant without impairing its purity. Her figure, too, is developed by so much exercise, and I think she has gained her full height. When I see her coming in after her ride, gathering the folds of her habit-skirt in one hand, her face so dazzling, yet so thoughtfully sweet, some tresses of her bright hair escaping from beneath the picturesque hat, that no one else ventures to wear, I think her (you know my maternal vanity) the most exquisite creature in the world.

"But this is not what I was going to say. That sentiment, Edith, which you thought would prove a girlish fancy, is become the absorbing passion that I always feared it would. From a child Alice has been earnest in every thing. It is admirable the efforts she makes to divert her mind from dwelling on the subject, to which it is irresistibly attracted. Every moment of the day has its occupation, but her rides and walks are necessarily solitary, which I regret; and in the evening her gayety is so evidently forced that it is painful; she plays and sings mechanically, and even Herbert's conversation is but an opportunity for reverie. I infer that this troubles her conscience. She sheds tears in the chapel, fasts oftener than usual, and on one occasion lately I found her, two hours after retiring for the night, still occupied in her oratory. This was after we had received a letter from Clifford to say that he was coming here to pay the visit so long ago proposed. She was praying audibly, in a voice choked with sobs, when I thus surprised her; but was so much ashamed to be discovered in so strong emotion, that I thought it better to take no notice of it.

"What can I say? She is but putting in practice my own lessons. I believe she would really sink in her own esteem if she were to accept Clifford, as long as he remains a Roman Catholic; and as for any likelihood of his changing his faith, I see none. That he is coming now to make a last effort to sweep away her scruples, in one of those favorable moments which are sure to occur, and of which he is said to know how to avail himself, I have no doubt. I believe she trembles at the trial in prospect.

Come then, Edith, and bring your baby. It will shake her resolution or rivet it. I want her to win a decisive victory, or yield at once; to show herself all a woman, or all a saint.

"God bless you, dearest, and take care that nurse does not give Master Ludovic any of Godfrey's cordial, or other of their horrid poisons.

"Your affectionate mother and friend,

"KATHERINE LENNOX.

"P. S.—You know I eschew postscripts, but, as I was folding this, Ally came in from her ride and from a great fright—a most audacious, unheard-of attempt to carry her off, or I know not what.

"She was cantering up the Cedar avenue, with old Williams about twenty yards behind her. As they passed one of the cross-paths that lead down to the beach, she observed a person lying on the ground at the road-side, and groaning lamentably. She drew up, of course, and, perceiving it to be a woman, jumped off her mare, and went up to ask what was the matter. Immediately, two stout fellows, armed with pistols, sprang out of the copse and seized her, each by an arm, saying, that she must go with them quietly if she valued her life. At the same time, the seeming woman (a man in woman's clothes) got up, and, showing a gun, threatened to shoot Williams through the head if he offered the least resistance.

"Ally struggled, crying out to Williams to ride boldly over them, without minding her; they meanwhile, dragged her along by main force. After a few steps she tripped in her long skirt, and one of the fellows was obliged to let go her arm for a moment, to take it up. Alice had still her riding whip in her hand, and instantly, with the butt end, struck the fellow who held her other wrist, so hard over the knuckles, that he, involuntarily, and with an oath, quitted his hold. She darted away, disappointing, by an unexpected turn, the third ruffian, who threw himself in her way. This fellow was impeded by his female attire, but the others started in pursuit, and one of them was very fleet. I need not tell you that he must have been very nimble indeed to overtake Alice. But she was obliged to stop, to gather up her long train, and, though it was only an instant, it nearly lost her again. Williams, too, trotted on by her side, utterly bewildered. Zuleika, frightened by her running, was about her own length in advance. The thing was, to mount again, without giving the scoundrels time to come up, for she could not count on escaping twice. It was a very lucky thing for her now that she had learned, as a child, to mount unassisted. She caught the creature, she hardly knows how, and got her seat in time; but the foremost of the bandits caught wildly at her fluttering skirt as the mare bounded forward under Williams's lash.

"The fellows' faces (I forgot to say) were masked. We suppose that they must belong to a gang of smugglers. The keepers are all ordered out, and the duke offers £5000 reward for the apprehension of the ruffians, or such information as shall lead to it. It is thought they can't escape. The time was when a Duke of Lennox would have hung the perpetrators of such an outrage on the first tree; but I believe

it is still a transportable felony. The forcible abduction of an heiress certainly is, the duke says, and he hopes the attempt may be found severely punishable.

"Dec. 8, *Thursday*.—A few words while the post-bag waits, to say how Alice is this morning. She suffered a good deal last night from nervous agitation, so that I did not leave her; but about day-break fell asleep, and is now composed as usual."

Lady Alice, buried in a large easy-chair, had her face covered with a handkerchief till the servant took away the letters. As soon as the man was gone, she removed it.

"I shall not go out again, mamma, till Frederick arrives."

"Do you think that no one but he is able to defend you, my love?"

"No one can defend me!" exclaimed Alice, bursting into hysterical sobs.

CHAPTER III.

It was a lofty room, though otherwise of small dimensions. The hour was sunset, and the single rich window, of perpendicular tracery, which lighted the apartment, and which commanded a view over terraced gardens descending to woody and still verdant slopes—covered with a great profusion of beautiful and luxuriant evergreens, and closed in at the horizon by the line of the sea, let in a red reflection from the western sky, but hardly strong enough to overpower the blaze of a sea-coal fire. What chiefly gave back the fire-light was the fretted ceiling of azure and gold, and the sumptuous crimson and orange of the carpet. The panels of the walls inclosed exquisite pictures, by a French artist, painted on orange satin—the History of Una. The graceful Caryatides of the mantle-piece, supported a bas-relief, clear and classic, in white statuary marble—the Rape of Proserpine with the maternal grief of Ceres. The folding door was burnished gold, painted with groups representing the four quarters of the globe. One of the valves was ajar. The room contained many seats of various fashions, and a huge sofa of green silk. A vase of malachite, a table of *pietra dura*, supporting an enormous bowl of ruby and gold glass, filled with choice flowers, and the clear bright mirror in which these objects were reflected, completed the furniture of the apartment.

On the sofa sate a lady, quite alone; youthful and beautiful exceedingly. Her evening dress, of light-blue silk, and berthe of richest lace, set off the luster of her arms and shoulders, sparkling like a snow-drift by sunrise, and the mantling splendor of her cheek.

The Lady Alice Stuart. Why she was thus sitting in this bright cabinet off her mother's own drawing-room, at least an hour before the first dinner-bell on the evening ('twas nearly the winter solstice, you observe) of Thursday, the eighth of December, eighteen hundred and forty-two, may presently be divined.

In her hand she held an open letter, of which, ever and anon, she spread out the smooth, satin-like foldings, and perused it by the still sufficient light. It would be vain to attempt to describe the ineffable smile that breathed on her rich lip as she did so; vain to attempt even to imagine the happiness that sparkled in the intense tremulous luster of her dark eyes. Sometimes her parted lips seemed to murmur a prayer or a thanksgiving; sometimes they timidly kissed the letter which appeared to be the cause of her joy.

Voices were now heard in the adjoining saloon. The door, as has been said, was ajar. The Lady Alice started, and listened eagerly. She blushed. She laid down the letter on the sofa, and with an airy step advanced to the door, listening with an averted and glowing face. Suddenly she retreated, with a quick, graceful movement, and resumed her seat. She looked first toward the window, then, with a blended expression of frankness and timidity, toward the door, which opened, and the form of her lover was before her. Alice rose, and advanced slowly to meet Clifford. He embraced her silently, and with deep seriousness. He was even pale. She hid her face in his breast.

"Your letter," she murmured at last, "has made me so happy!"

"Did its contents surprise you?" he asked, in the same tone.

They sate down on two ottomans before the fire; Alice taking again his letter; and they talked on the sacred theme which alone had been mentioned in it. Not a word was said of love, or of any engagement; but Clifford held her hand all the time in his, and occasionally, in addressing each other, escaped some epithet of endearment, which Alice uttered earnestly, but always blushing. At the end of an hour came a servant, to show Mr. Clifford his room.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Clifford re-entered the saloon, Alice was there, with her mother, whom he had already seen, and the two eldest of the young children then at home. He perceived that they had been talking of him. His beautiful mistress welcomed him back with a glance of undisguised and serious tenderness; the manner of the duchess expressed a deep regard, almost imperceptibly shaded by her sensitive maternal jealousy. Presently Mr. Courtenay came in, and greeted him with warmth, and last the duke, who had been at St. Valerie all the morning, taking measures, with the officers of the revenue and the commander of the coast-guard, for the apprehension of the authors of the outrage of the preceding evening, and, having seen only servants since his return, was merely aware that Mr. Clifford had arrived. His grace, therefore, met him but as a long-expected guest, and one to whom the family were under great obligations; but the father of Alice was very cordial, and after some warm words of welcome, turned to his daughter, at first with anxiety, then with a smile, and said he perceived she was better since the morning.

"You have not mentioned to Mr. Clifford your

unpleasant adventure of yesterday?" said the duchess, covering her daughter's slight embarrassment in replying.

"It is an extremely odd affair, but we will save it for the dessert," said the duke, with cheerfulness.

A white-haired butler announced that his grace's dinner was served. The duchess took the arm of her brother, and Alice put hers within Frederick's. The duke gave his hand to an exquisite little girl of about nine years—the Lady Kate; and a graceful yet manly boy, two years older, followed, who was the Lord Harry Stuart. The dining-room was a chamber that formed part of the same suite with the duchess's cabinet and saloon; you reached it by passing a small library. It was generally called the Vandyke chamber, because its chief interest and ornament were the portraits of a duke and duchess of Lennox by the favorite court painter of Charles I. The table was round, and the dinner served on very beautiful old porcelain of Ind, such as is generally kept in great houses for show. There was a momentary pause ere the family became seated, and Herbert Courtenay said the brief and beautiful college grace—*Benedictus benedicat*.

Despite the absorbing sense of happiness, to which all the sweet domestic habitudes that he observed not a little contributed, Clifford was not distrait; nor had love upon him the common effect of destroying the appetite; and Alice also, who ate nothing, amused herself with preventing his wants; for the dinner (capital, too) was served in the old-fashioned style, which, after all, is so much more home-like, and interests even the affections in the details of a household event. If Alice did not eat, she talked. She possessed that art, so charming in woman, of lightly and carelessly touching homely and household topics so as to suggest associations of wit, of sentiment, and even of pathos. This evening she seemed desirous of atoning for that depression and those fits of absence which lately had thrown a gloom over this affectionate circle. While every one else was something serious, she was even gay. Once or twice it brought tears to the eyes of the duchess, who, participating in her daughter's joy, could not think with composure of soon parting with her. Her father, not yet in the secret, saw in this tender excitement but a new proof of the strength of her attachment to Clifford, and reflected also, with some satisfaction, that if it ended as he had all along suspected, her marriage would at all events relieve him of a great anxiety he felt on her account.

Thinking of this, he called upon Alice to tell the story of the attempted abduction, which startled her lover very much. He praised Alice's courage and presence of mind, and wondered at the audacity of the ruffians; but when the name of Matson was mentioned, he exchanged with his mistress a glance of intelligence.

Soon after, the duchess rose. There was another momentary pause, and Herbert Courtenay said—*'Benedicto benedicatur.'* Clifford was looking at Alice, and observed that she made openly, but without affectation, the sign of the cross, as she turned away from the table. Mr. Courtenay withdrew with the ladies—an old-fashioned custom to which he adhered except when the duke

was alone; and the youthful Lord Harry also made his escape.

"I believe I have to crave your grace's pardon," said Frederick Clifford, as they resumed their seats, "for having won the affections of your incomparable daughter without asking your consent."

This necessarily entailed an explanation—one that a good deal surprised the father of Alice, who at first hardly knew what to think of a conversion that was to be rewarded with the hand of the greatest and noblest heiress in Britain, not to say, the loveliest. He was not left long to doubt. The firmness of Alice had not been lost on her father, but the wisdom and eloquence of Frederick Clifford, of whose vast knowledge, as well of men as of books, the duke was already cognizant, carried all before them.

"I have gained faith in my heart, instead of a balance of probabilities that I might have put in my pocket," said Frederick;—"substantial, and I trust, fruitful, convictions, for a paralyzing creed that I never could heartily act upon or cheerfully suffer for, because I never could free myself from a suspicion of its unsoundness."

"You have got something, then, that I should very much like to have."

"And your grace really thought," pursued Frederick, "that Alice could have been led, as a consequence of the profound and Catholic culture which she has received, to embrace the superficial and halting system of the Romanizers? My dear sir, your daughter believes too much, and believes it too earnestly, ever to commit so great a practical mistake."

"I begin to think so."

"There is a popery panic just now," he continued, "founded on ignorance, like all panics. The real reason why men are leaving the Church is, that the Church has forsaken herself. The mother who denies her children bread must expect that they will accept it at the hand of strangers, and our present organization, by stimulating the cravings of the imagination, and then refusing to satisfy them, seems ingeniously contrived, without actually starving the soul, to produce all the consequences of a spiritual famine."

"I hope we shall have many opportunities of pursuing this subject," said the duke earnestly, "but, after what you have been telling me, I should not be justified now in keeping you any longer from the ladies."

It was the same saloon where, ten years before, Lady Alice, a child of eight springs, sat by her beautiful mother's side at the same hour. The blue-eyed and fair-ringleted Lady Kate is now trying to provoke a last game at romps with Alice herself. And the elder sister is sportive; it appears that to-night she will content all who love her; but her father and her lover appear, and she quiets the little girl with a whisper and an embrace. The duke did not join their hands and bless them; he was not at all that sort of man, but there are benedictions which are not less touching because not formally uttered. Herbert Courtenay was sitting with a new Puseyite novel in his hand, but not reading. His fore finger was inserted at the place of the half closed volume, and he gazed at the vivid colors and gilding of a cinque-cento picture in the panel of the carved mantle-piece, with an air of contemplative beatitude. He did not look

round as the duke and Clifford entered, and the latter, passing him with a smile, seated himself next the duchess, and, observing, how beautiful the rooms were, asked if they ordinarily occupied this brilliant suite. Palaces led to cottages, and then to their inmates; to the rural population of Devonshire and their lingering superstitions, of which the duchess had some charming stories to relate. Meanwhile, Harry Stuart was busy copying one of his sister's drawings, and the duke, dropping into a corner of the sofa where Alice was whispering to Lady Kate, drew the latter upon his knee, and said to the former in a quiet but sympathizing manner, "It will be a long time before this little girl will replace you, my child." His daughter deeply blushed and kissed his hand. "It is fortunate—providential is not it?" he continued, "Mr. Clifford's coming just at this juncture, when you so much need a cavalier. It will really quite remove our anxiety about you, to know that when you are away you are with him."

"I should feel safer under his protection than under that of any one."

"Naturally," said her father, with a kind smile, "and we can trust you to him. I really think so."

"Ally!" said her brother, "I wish you would show me what is wrong about this left leg. It don't look right."

"And after that, you will let us have some tea, Ally," said her father.

"It is because you have fore-shortened too timidly," said Alice, bending over the drawing.

Tea roused Herbert Courtenay, and after tea came music. Clifford and Alice sang together for the first time.

"I am glad you like music," said the duke, "for with that and botany you will get on. Devonshire is not a famous hunting-county, you know; but our native flora is interesting, and even at this season you may find amusement in my conservatories."

Chapel followed; a thing not to be passed over without notice in a residence of the House of Lennox. For the first time, Frederick saw the Church of England service celebrated as becomes the worship of Him who ordained the magnificent ritual of the first temple, and in the days of his humiliation showed himself a zealot for the honor of the second. The rite, as becomes its beautiful name of "Even Song," was almost entirely choral, and without instrumental accompaniment. The chanting of the psalms, the burst of the anthems, the melody of the hymn, the rich intoning of the prayers, with the varied harmony of the full choral Amen, naturally seemed to Clifford the very ideal of worship; but what, as a converted Romanist, he ever found most impressive, were the English lessons, to which he listened as the immediate word of the Lord, with a sense of mysterious and oracular utterance. The sublimity of Isaiah—like the voice of thunders issuing from Jehovah's cloudy throne—the promise of "a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept," seemed writ for the occasion, and sustained this deep and enthusiastic faith, which Frederick believed to be reasonable, unless the Church were a delusion. And the first chapter of St. James's Epistle, which was the second lesson, seemed

not less a prophecy, over whose words of warning he, long after, deeply meditated.

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted;

"But the rich in that he is made low:

"Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

"For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat,

"But it withereth the grass,

"And the flower thereof falleth,

"And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth:

"So shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:

"For when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life,

"Which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

An anthem from Scripture was interposed among the prayers, and a hymn added at the close, both alluding to the season of Advent. He was struck with the simplicity and beauty of the hymn, and learned, on inquiry, that it had been composed by Alice.

There are few things so sweet as the parting at night of lovers who are to sleep for the first time under the same roof. At St. Valerie, the heartless modes of our domestic life had never intruded, or had long been banished. The household affections no less than the religious, had their sustaining ritual. The "good-night" of this family was a sweet ceremony, formal, but for that very reason, better protecting the hidden life of love. Not to omit it on account of Clifford's presence, was to treat him as a son and a brother, which was equally unexpected and agreeable. Would it not appear that two beings could scarcely be happier than Frederick and Alice?

CHAPTER V.

THE morning was rainy; no uncommon event in the county of Devon. A thick white fog hung over the sea. There was no wind; the air soft, and depressingly warm. The windows of the breakfast-room were open as in summer, though the grate was piled with blazing coals, to overpower the dampness of the atmosphere.

"This is not one of your fine hunting mornings in—shire," said the duke, to Clifford. "I don't get accustomed to the west of England, though we have lived here so much."

"I admired the country very much yesterday," said Clifford. "Looking down upon the valley from whence I got the first sight of the house, I thought it was a Paradise."

"So it is," said Alice.

"And then the sea-view!" said the duchess. "Well, I like Devonshire."

"You are a native of it," said her husband. "But we are kept here at present," he continued, turning to Frederick, "by duties, of which you are to have a specimen to-day, Clifford. Is it not so, Ally?"

"We devote Friday to visiting the sick, and otherwise afflicted, in our parishes," said Alice, as Frederick looked to her for explanation. "I hoped you would accompany me. The district is so extensive, that mamma and I take separate beats."

"A word with you, Clifford," said the duke, turning to a bay-window that overlooked the terrace where the carriage was waiting, while Alice, all ready, exchanged some last words with her mother—"a word with you. I think," he

said in an under tone, "that you had better take the opportunity, this morning, of coming directly to the point with Alice. This is an ugly affair of the day before yesterday. No doubt, a plan to force her into a marriage. So great an heiress, and every thing left absolutely in her own power;—'tis a great temptation; and, so near the sea as we are here, the thing might be done but too easily. No danger, guarded as she will be this morning; but a slight remission of our vigilance, and she might be carried off in a moment. And there is some one in the house in communication with these fellows. That is clear. You had better, then, arrange it between you; get her to fix the day; use my name, if you like; and to-morrow we will all go to Leighton, where, with the rail-road, we are within an hour of London. We will spend Christmas there. Settlements, and all that sort of thing, will make this step natural, for I don't like to have the air of being frightened. At the same time, Alice is not to be exposed to such risks. Don't you agree with me?"

"I think Alice is too precious to be risked in any way," said the lover.

Whether it was that our heroine had some fluttering presentiment of the topics this drive was likely to bring forth, and of the determination of her fate to which it was to lead, or that she dallied, as women will, with her own wishes, and shrank from the interview which she most desired, certainly she never had so lingered. While Clifford held his hat in a hand that trembled with suppressed impatience, Alice appeared to think she could find no better opportunity for saying to her mother, several things that did not seem particularly pertinent. Then she stopped to arrange some flowers in one of the vases, as if she had quite forgotten the expedition of the morning. She was at last about to go, and had said to Frederick that she was ready, when she remembered a promise to Goody Sensitive, the week before, which the duchess was to keep in her rounds; and even when they had left the room, Alice abruptly turned, ran back quickly, and embraced her mother, who was now alone.

The carriage was a britska, with four horses; the footman on the box, well-armed, as were two outriders; and Clifford's own servant rode behind, with his belt stuck full of pistols, under his cloak, and dangling at his side, a saber, that had done service in the course of his master's southern and oriental travels. Alice blushed at the sight of these preparations. "Surely," she said, "they are unnecessary?"

"I believe they will be sufficient," said her father, with a constrained smile, as he half lifted her into the carriage.

In a minute they were off at full speed, and rolling along a smooth road of the park. The youthful Lady Kate was their companion, and Clifford, who sate on the front seat, found a huge basket at his side.

"Out-door relief?" he said.

"Not precisely. These are visits more of sympathy than of charity, but even the sympathy of the rich should not be quite empty-handed."

His beautiful companion went on, with great earnestness and simplicity, to explain to him the system pursued at St. Walerie in regard to alms-

giving—schools—plans for the reform of the vicious. An essential feature was, to do as little as possible as individuals, and as much as possible as members, first of the Church, and then of religious societies associated for works of mercy. In this way they endeavored to avoid that fatal ostentation which is almost inseparable from English charity, and which injures both the parties to an imperfect benefit. Thus, it struck Clifford at once, that the dress of Alice—black, and of formal simplicity—had a very conventual air. A perfectly plain hood, of black silk lined with white, surrounded that charming and saint-like countenance. It was really the habit of a Sisterhood of Mercy, of which she was a member, and her mother the superior.

"I believe it is useful," she said, in reply to his remark on the excellent tendency of this. "It reminds at once those whom I visit that my coming is in discharge of a religious duty. There are some whom the condescension of a great lady offends; still more in whom it gratifies a servile feeling. 'Tis hard, do what we will, to make it understood that we come as sisters in Christ, who dare not, because we are rich in this world, despise or neglect a brother or sister of low degree."

"It is picturesque, also," said Clifford, with a smile.

"Ah, you should see us in a chapter, or on a festival, at the parish church of St. Walerie: forty of us in our black robes and white muslin veils, going up the aisle in procession, and the uniformed children of our schools, two and two, every pair making a genuflexion and the sign of the cross, in front of the altar, before taking their places."

"You have the right feeling here," said Frederick, with energy.

With a touching frankness she spoke of her wish to introduce, with his assistance, a similar system at Bromswold, the celebrated seat in Yorkshire, which had devolved on her by her brother's will.

"It is a fine old place, I have heard?"

"And a very great estate," said Alice; "greater than St. Walerie. You will be very rich, dear Fred, of which I am glad."

"After two minorities, your funded property must also be very great."

"It considerably exceeds a million, at present, I believe," said Alice, carelessly. "Ludovic was generous, very; but he never had an establishment; he traveled a great deal, and always inexpensively; often on foot or on horseback. He was very fond of adventure. Such scrapes he got me into when I was about thirteen, and as wild as the fawns in Stratherne Forest!—Once, he persuaded me to go off with him in his yacht, and we went to Norway. We were gone two months. Conceive mamma's anxiety. That is the way I came to be such a favorite of his. I have had a strong roving and gipsy propensity ever since. It was my dream how I might one day gratify it—until I knew you."

"You shall gratify it with me."

"No," replied Alice, "that is impossible; and besides, I have ceased to wish it. My dream is different now."

"And that dream?"

"To open to you, by my fortune, dear Fred, a career worthy of your genius, and to share

your glory," said Alice, with a beaming glance of blended love and pride.

"Dear Alice, your fortune is indeed immense. The world will never believe the disinterestedness of my conversion, with two such motives. The Cliffords, I know, will say that I have apostatized for lucre."

"One way or another, those who will follow the truth, must suffer for the truth's sake. It is written so."

"It is a providential law," said Clifford; "yet the world might as well doubt the disinterestedness of my love, which I think they hardly will, although you are not lovelier than the truth which I have embraced."

The presence of Lady Kate imposed a restraint upon the actions of the lovers, perhaps equally agreeable to both, but scarcely any upon their language. At least, there was nothing they wished to say which they could not, before the innocent and now quiet little girl, who paid great attention to a conversation which she imperfectly understood, and on which the calm demeanor of her sister and future brother afforded no clear commentary.

"And when shall I be put in possession of this great fortune?" said Clifford, looking at her.

"Oh, in about two years and a half," said Alice, evasively, and looking at her young sister's grave, attentive face. "I shall not be of age sooner than that."

"Then I can, without indelicacy, urge that our union take place as soon as possible. 'Twill be so much gained of quiet domestic happiness at Clifford Grove, free from the responsibilities of wealth and cares of station."

"That will be delightful," said Alice, looking out of the carriage window.

"Your father himself suggested that I should get you to name a day," continued Frederick, "for reasons that, I think, are obvious."

"I am not reluctant," said Alice, crimsoning, "and I will not affect it. You know that I love you."

Clifford murmured his gratitude.

"I should have liked to be married in London, in the season; to do you honor before the world; to look my prettiest, be very beautifully dressed, and all on some bright morning of the most auspicious month—say June. May is unlucky for weddings; and, though one is not superstitious, still, when a thing is to be done once for all, the time should be of perfect augury."

"Six months!" exclaimed her lover. "Oh, that is quite out of the question, my dear Alice. I think we may lay it down to begin with, that it must be before Lent."

"Then it must be very soon," said Alice, with a cheek still of the deepest rose, and sinking back in the corner of the carriage. "It must be very, very soon, or else the first moon will fall within the Santa Quadragesima, or at least within the weeks of preparation, and I really should not like that. To put ashes on a forehead where the fragrance of the orange blossoms lingered," she added, in a half-playful tone covering her deep feeling—"to humble my soul with fasting in the midst of my bridal joy—this would indeed be putting new wine into old bottles."

"We will avoid the Quadragesima, then, and the weeks of preparation, too," said Clifford,

with triumph, and slightly laughing. "What day does Septuagesima fall this year?"

With some embarrassment, she extended him a prayer-book—indispensable companion of a Sister of Mercy. Septuagesima was found to fall on the twelfth of February. The twelfth of January, then, Clifford observed, was exactly five weeks "from to-day," and it would be Thursday. Five weeks would both allow ample time to make all the legal arrangements, and bring the honeymoon wholly within the festive season of Epiphany, which, he agreed with her, was indispensable. Meanwhile, he had somehow changed places with the astonished Lady Kate. Alice was pale and serious, but encountered his eye with unshrinking tenderness. He took her hand, and kissed her faintly-colored and trembling lip. "On every account," he said, earnestly, it can not be later. But perhaps, since it is to be soon, you will spare yourself agitation by naming an earlier day. A fortnight could finish these settlements just as well."

"Oh, no, no! not earlier," said Alice, again vividly crimsoning; "at least, not much earlier."

"Well?" he inquired, with a beating heart and a look of passionate anxiety.

"Five weeks, or four, would make no difference," said the beautiful Sister of Mercy, laying her head on his shoulder.

The carriage stopped, and Alice quickly raised her head. A countryman, very well mounted, who must have been following close, passed the window. As the footman leaped down from the box to open the carriage door, the countryman's horse started and shied, nearly throwing his rider, who struck spurs into the animal and muttered an oath.

"That is one of those men," said Alice, touching Frederick's arm. "I know the voice, and that profane expression."

Clifford was out of the carriage, and the fellow off his horse, and on the ground, in the twinkling of an eye.

"A—what, measter! a—what is that for?" said the man, struggling to rise.

"Lie still," said Clifford, keeping him down with one foot, and pulling a pistol from his breast. "Search and tie this fellow," he added to the servants, who now crowded round, "and put him behind the carriage."

A pair of pistols were found in the side pockets of the man's coarse frock, and a knife in the breast. The case no longer admitted of a doubt. The fellow became pale as this evidence of his true character turned up. He was soon secured. Clifford now proposed returning home, but Alice, who stood on the carriage steps, with a flashing eye and cheek and a swelling bosom, refused, with spirit, to deviate in any respect from her intended course. The carriage had stopped at a cottage where she was to have paid a visit. Clifford, therefore, disposed the servants to watch, and entered the cottage with his mistress. He was resolved not, on any account, to let her out of his sight. In this way passed several hours. He perceived that it was no holiday amusement in which Alice was engaged.

At length they arrived at the fishing village called St. Valerie-on-the-Beach. This was the last visit, and here it was necessary to leave the carriage and walk a certain distance. A fine

rain was falling. Alice said that Lady Kate must stay behind.

"But why mayn't I go too, dear Ally?"

"It is too wet, my dear; you will splash your stockings."

"But my stockings are splashed already, and see my pantalettes!" said the little girl, looking down at them with despair.

"Then you must stay because I think it best, my dear Kate," said her sister, in a firm, gentle tone, kissing away a tear of disappointment. Lady Kate instantly submitted.

The footman remained with the carriage to watch over his young lady and guard the prisoner. The two outriders and Luigi, Clifford's servant, accompanied the master of the latter and Lady Alice. Clifford was not sorry for the occasion of holding the umbrella over the fair form of his companion, or the necessity that made her cling to his arm, and often lightly press to his side as they picked their way down the narrow and dirty street.

"This is a sad place," said Alice, tender and animated more than ever. "The people are chiefly engaged in fishing, but some, under that pretext, carry on less lawful trades. St. Valerie is a port, you know—were it not for this dense mist you might see papa's yacht lying in the bay—and the irregular persons who frequent it do not improve its morals. The girls are famed, all along the coast, for their beauty, and I am afraid too many of them have found it a snare."

"See how singularly the houses on this side are built, jutting over the water. This is all ground thrown up out of the sea; though some say that the sea has subsided. Still, the tide sometimes comes into the lower floors of these houses. The original low-water mark was on the rocks above our heads, for the clefts in the limestone show it to be perforated with the cells of a marine animal, the—"

"The *Sexicava Rugosa*?"

"Yes," said Alice, with a sweet smile, "which can not live below the point of daily submersion. But I was saying, the girls here have a bad character, and some of them, I am certain, deserve it. That pretty creature who passed us just now with so deep a reverence, of which I took no notice, is the very worst of a very depraved family. I know their history, because the eldest girl is dying of consumption—a penitent, I really think. I am going now to see her, which is the reason I would not let Kate come along. Not that she would see or hear any thing to harm her, but it seems like profaning the innocence of such a child to take her to a place so contaminated."

"And you, too, are innocent."

"Indeed, I trust so," said Alice, "but here is the house."

Its appearance was rather decent. It was, in fact, the middle house of a row, of higher pretensions than any other in the street. That, however, was not saying much. It was of brick, two storied, low between the beams, with one window looking on the street, on the first floor, and two on the second. The single window, on the first or ground floor, was closed, within, by shutters.

The door opened into a narrow passage, running through the house, with a steep stair at the further end, and a door beyond that, look-

ing out upon the sea. From the last door, an outside stair led down the steep side of the rock on which the house was built, to the water, in a flight of perhaps a dozen steps. Here lay moored an empty boat, of which the stern had an awning, with curtains of striped calico.

These particulars Frederick ascertained by reconnoitering, which, on his part, was rather a matter of habitual caution than of apprehension. As for another attempt upon the liberty and person of Alice, he thought it impossible, guarded as she was, and above all; in the midst of a populous village, inhabited by people who, as he observed from their manners and words as she passed, entertained for her a devoted, though undisciplined attachment.

The house contained, we may further explain, four rooms. The front room, below, was the best. It was the sleeping room of the father and mother of the family and their younger children. In the rear of this was the kitchen, which served as a common eating room; above the latter was an apartment where the sons, when at home, slept together; and another, on the same floor, larger and occupying the whole front, was a bed-room, occupied by the elder daughters, four in number. It was to this last that Lady Alice now ascended, having ascertained from a little girl of about thirteen, who had opened the door, that the invalid was alone. Frederick would have accompanied her, but Alice positively would not permit him. One of the servants followed his lady, bearing some slight delicacy for the invalid. In a few minutes this man returned, and, mounting his horse, resumed his station in the street. In spite of a feeling that it was somewhat ridiculous to anticipate a surprise of any sort, Frederick Clifford, muttering to himself that it was better to err on the side of caution where the safety of one so dear was concerned, set wide open the doors above described, by which the passage opened at one end upon the street, and at the other upon the sea, and, with one hand plunged into his breast-pocket, and grasping a pistol concealed in it, he paced up and down the narrow corridor, in the manner of a sentinel. Nor could the reflection escape him, in calculating the chances of an attack, that if any thing so audacious had been meditated, the seizure of the fellow whom he rightly conjectured to have been acting as a scout, would probably disconcert the whole affair.

Twenty minutes might have elapsed in this way when, as he approached the front door, his servant touched his hat and said, looking up with a respectful but anxious air—

"My lady is standing at the window above, and begs you to step out into the street, sir, that she may speak to you."

Clifford, of course, instantly stepped out, and looked up. Alice was at the small window, which was half open. Her face was deadly pale, but calm. She smiled faintly and kissed her hand, then disappeared, as if she had swooned. He rushed to re-enter the house, just as the door was violently shut in his face.

"Treachery!" he shouted. "Off your horses! No; call assistance—get boats instantly!—that's the plan. Rouse the village—offer any money!"

He threw himself, with the force of a maniac,

against the door, but it did not yield. With a saber caught from his servant he dashed in the window on the street in an instant. Springing to the sill, and holding on by the shattered frame, which cut his fingers with fragments of glass, he endeavored by another furious effort to burst in the shutters; but, formed of thick plank, lined with iron, and secured by bars within, they stubbornly resisted.

At this instant the pale, wasted features of the consumptive girl appeared at the open window of the room above. She made signs to him to listen.

"It's no use now trying to get in," she said, in a hollow voice. "They're a carryin' her off a'ready in the boat—"

Clifford did not wait to hear the rest, but ran up the street, which by this time was full of confusion. One man eagerly offered a boat, and Clifford, followed by the three servants, dashed to the water side. The boat with the awning and curtains of striped calico, which had been at the water-stair of the house, as already noted, was now descried, standing out seaward, pulled by six stout oars.

The boat of the pursuers was equally well manned. Frederick himself pulled the stroke oar, and three St. Walerie-Super-mare men, with the two servants of the duke, handled each one, and with good will. Luigi steered. At first, it seemed that they gained, but every now and then, one of the villagers, a stout lad and willing, missed the stroke, and once he backed water, nearly lost his oar, and caused a delay that was horrible where every moment was golden. Clifford seized him by the waist, and, the boat being still in shallow water, dropped him over the side, leaving him to scramble to shore, which he did in a few moments. Redoubling his own superhuman exertions, the boat shot forward more rapidly than before. It had ceased raining, but there was a dense fog, as has been said, brooding over the face of a smooth sea.

"We gain upon them," said Luigi, in English. "Hardly that, your excellency," he added, in his own tongue; "but I think we hold our own at present."

Fifteen minutes elapsed; Frederick occasionally cheering the men and promising magnificent rewards if they succeeded.

"Those *benedetti* English servants of my lord's pull too quick and deep, your excellency. The assassins gain upon us. The head of their boat is beginning to be lost in this cursed fog."

"Good God!" thought Clifford, still straining at the oar, "then all is lost. Give way!" he called out. "When we are about to lose sight of her altogether," he added to Luigi, with desperate calmness, "tell me."

In ten minutes more this was announced, and Clifford, resigning the oar to Luigi, rose in the stern, and looked at his pocket compass. Nothing was now visible of the other boat, even to his far-reaching vision, but the curtains of the awning. Suddenly these were drawn aside, and Clifford could distinguish a dark figure, and the waving of a white handkerchief. He clasped his hands in agony, and followed with straining eyes till the whole was shrouded in the thick and cold white veil that interposed between him and his beloved.

CHAPTER VI.

WE may as well state at once all that the Duke of Lennox and Clifford could ascertain in regard to this extraordinary abduction.

The house in which it had occurred was opened by the inmates ere the boat of the daring and successful ravishers had got fairly off, and the crowd of villagers had rushed in, of course uselessly. The mother of the family, and the young girl who had opened the door to Frederick and Lady Alice, were the only persons found in it, except the consumptive girl, who was become nearly speechless, and died in the course of the night. The story told by the two former to their excited neighbors did not differ materially from what they afterward deposed on oath.

Both protested that they had not been aware of any men being in the house until the rush consequent on closing the door; that then, coming out of the kitchen, they found the staircase and passage full of persons whom they did not know, and all of whom were masked but one—a man dressed like a gentleman, and very handsome, who talked to Lady Alice, then descending the stair, and in a foreign language. Her ladyship, they agreed, though deadly pale, neither resisted nor replied. There was no violence: no one even touched her. She descended the stair unassisted, and looking like a princess, as she always did.

The consumptive girl said, that while Lady Alice was sitting by her bedside, and talking to her "like an angel from heaven," a man dressed like a gentleman suddenly stood by her, whose approach neither Lady Alice nor herself had perceived; that Lady Alice started up with a proud, indignant look, but not frightened; that the gentleman addressed her in a low voice, and in a foreign language, pointing to the door leading to the stair; that then he went to that door, and set it wide open, when Lady Alice instantly became pale as death; that he closed it again and approached her, and she spoke some words in an imploring and agitated manner; the gentleman shook his head and raised a whistle to his lips; that then, Lady Alice laid her hand quickly on his arm, and, at last, after a good deal of hesitation, and with evident reluctance, had approached the window, to ask to speak with Mr. Clifford in the street. Her ladyship then went away with the gentleman, only saying: "Farewell, Maria: I shall, perhaps, never see you again!"

Neither Clifford nor the family of Alice could doubt that her motive had been to save his life, which, had an alarm been given, and he had rushed up the stair, as he would certainly have done, must have been sacrificed—supposing that the bandits were prepared, as they seemed to be, for that extremity of violence.

In regard to the other members of this family, whose connivance in the outrage might have been suspected, the father and the three sons had been absent a week, on a fishing cruise, they said, but which appeared evidently to have been a smuggling expedition. Two of the elder daughters had gone that morning to St. Walerie, the borough, being a market-day; and the fourth daughter was the pretty girl who had met Clifford and Lady Alice in the street, and had made the latter so deep a reverence. This girl had

proceeded to the carriage left standing at the entrance of the village, entered into conversation with the servants, and succeeded in enticing the footman to follow her a short distance. When he returned, the prisoner had escaped, and the coachman, sitting tranquilly on his box, was not even aware of the fact. Subsequently, Mary Hervey (so she was called) was observed by some children getting into a boat with two men, one of whom, by the description, appeared to have been Clifford's late prisoner. She was never heard of afterward. The mother of the family confessed that the boat with the awning had lately come several times for her daughter, and that the latter had as often spent the night away; as she believed, on board the vessel to which the boat belonged.

It was ascertained that the vessel in question—a schooner yacht, said by the crew to belong to a Mr. Dudley—had been lying off and on St. Walerie for a week. A light wind that came on in the afternoon dispersed the fog, and discovered this craft standing toward the French coast.

What man could do, was done. Every boat

at St. Walerie was out all the day, with a steam-tug that lay in the port, cruising through the fog, in the hope of lighting on the vessel or boat of the ruffians, and, as soon as the wind allowed, the duke's yacht also started in pursuit. The steam-tug, with Clifford on board, and about twenty men, including his armed servants and some of the coastguard, was in sight of the suspected vessel at night-fall, and that was the last that was ever seen of her.

On the night of the 9th, a violent gale came on to blow, and held for several days. There were numerous wrecks, as well on the coast of France as England, but this vessel was not among them, and it was supposed that she foundered at sea. Many months after, this supposition was confirmed, as will be afterward related more particularly, by the testimony of two men who escaped from her; but the real fate of Lady Alice Stuart, in spite of the exertions of her friends, and the unlimited rewards they offered, remained shrouded in a mystery as impenetrable as the vailing mist into which she had disappeared from the eyes of her lover.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE Exposition of modern pictures in the Piazza del Popolo at Rome, is one of the most interesting that can be seen in Europe. The number of pictures exhibited at once is not considerable, and in the lounge of an hour one may fairly examine each work separately, but here may be observed specimens of the art from every nation, and in every style, and usually good in their kind. If mediocrity predominates, as in all exhibitions, yet at Rome the atmosphere of art is so pervading that gross public violations of taste are the exception; and almost always there are a few pictures on the walls that are gems—such as you might travel over half Europe besides without seeing:—we speak of modern art. No city can boast of more living genius, albeit of foreign origin, than the metropolis of the Past.

On a fine morning of the week after Christmas, of the year 1844, the two rooms of the Pontifical Dogana devoted to the Exposition were filled with the accustomed crowd of artists and amateurs of the arts. Long-haired painters, in picturesque tunics of black velvet, with Raffaele caps or slouching wide-awakes; and English travelers, in trowsers and gaiters of shepherd's tartan, with bright cravats and sharp standing shirt collars, and the inevitable, but here useless, "Murray" protruding its red cover from the side pockets of their paletots, made the principal features of the scene. It was curious to listen to the remarks made on pictures, by artists of different nations. The Germans dilated, with instructed profundity, on the *motives* of a composition, on its ideal truth; discovering in this no creative intuition, in that, a conventional treatment. The French noticed the triumph of successful imitation; the English admired or

condemned in gross, often correctly; but, in descending to details, where all distinction lies, were generally either trivial or mistaken. The *conoscente* Italian shrugged his shoulders in silence, or gesticulated with vehemence his exaggerated but picturesque criticism.

There was one picture in the inner saloon (if it may be called a saloon) which obtained a nearly unanimous verdict of approval—a St. Cecilia, with attendant angels. It was of the cabinet size, in three compartments, as if intended for an altar. In the narrow side-panel on the left, Miriam, David, and Asaph, honoring the Adorable Mystery, represented the Sacred Song of the Old Testament; in that on the right, St. Mary, St. Simeon, and St. Zachary, the authors of the three evangelical canticles, symbolized that of the New. The youthful St. Asaph was in the dress of a Levite, the aged Zachary, in that of a Priest. The simplicity of the groupings, the contrasted masculine and feminine characters, the variety of ages and distinction of costume, made these panels very interesting. The drawing was extremely accurate; the colors vivid, and sensuously beautiful, in a high degree.

But the glory and wonder of the picture was St. Cecilia herself. The golden-haired saint sits on a throne. Her blue drapery, edged with gold, falls in chaste folds to her sandaled feet. Two angels, kneeling, one on either side, support a scroll of music; the instrument is in her lap; her large, prophet-like, dark eyes are raised to heaven, her rich lips parted in the divine song.

The German artists found in this picture motives of the highest order, and a simple severity of treatment, a purity and expressiveness of outline, a sweetness and spirituality of coloring, that astonished them; for it was an English artist who had thus surpassed their own models in

their own way. The French, again, were delighted with the conscientious finish of the minutest details; and the English, though they blamed this, were charmed with the unearthly beauty and serenity of the angels, and the divine majesty of loveliness and inspiration on the heavenly countenance of the Saint.

"You know your countryman, the Signor Fitzalan?" demanded a German, of an Englishman.

"Oh, yes. I know him well. A very interesting person."

"We all like him," rejoined the Tedesco. "He has so true a feeling for art, and is so sympathetic as a friend. He has not (*mi scusi*) your national reserve; and so many talents! One so young, who knew so much, I never before met."

"He is universally popular," said the Englishman, courteously. A friend of his own nation addressed him.

"I say, Macpherson, this is the nicest bit of color Fitzalan has done yet. Might have been more generalized, perhaps; outline a little too sharp; and I can't say I admire the use of the gold leaf in the hair of St. Cecilia. The effect is brilliant, but the means are vicious, don't you think?"

"It is appropriate to the school. Fra Angelico always did it."

"I'll tell you," pursued his companion, with energy, "why Fitzalan succeeds so well in his heads of female saints. He does them from himself. Don't you see? The Saint Cecilia has just his eyes and lips; idealized, of course, but the same character."

"You give him credit for a good deal of vanity. He is deuced handsome; that's certain. I have often begged him to let me paint a head from him, but he won't."

"That's it. He wants to keep his head for himself."

At that juncture there was a slight stir among the artists gathered round the Saint Cecilia, which had that morning been placed in the Exposition. It was occasioned by the entrance of the painter. He was warmly and even affectionately complimented on his work, in three or four different languages, to all of which he replied with great facility, and in a quiet yet off-hand manner.

The garb of Mr. Fitzalan did not exemplify that picturesque affectation which we excuse in artists. Indeed, his appearance presented a remarkable contrast to that of his companions, nearly all of whom wore some costume more or less bizarre, and who offered—one young English gentleman being excepted, a circle of mustached lips and bearded chins.

Fitzalan was attired in the highest style of French fashion. A hat, of which the shape and gloss attested its Gallic origin, crowned his clustering, dark, silken curls. A well-fashioned paletôt-pelisse of the finest black cloth, richly braided and trimmed with sables, was partly open in front, and disclosed a dark-blue, single-breasted frock, buttoned round the slender waist; a waistcoat of stone-colored silk; and a cravat of light-blue and gold brocade, which suffered very little of the beautiful linen to appear. These articles of dress fitted with exactness an elegant, somewhat undulating, shape; forming that

graceful swell over the bust by which the exquisites of the most refined of cities would appear to emulate the bounty of Nature to a softer sex. The ample tube of the fancy trowsers tapered down to the wondrously small French boots; gloves, couleur de paille, covered the femininely small hands; and the young artist carried a glass dangling at his breast, and a little silver-headed black cane in his hand, wherewith he played as he talked.

Mr. Fitzalan might, perhaps, be turned of twenty, with the stature and radiant cheek of Eros' self. Eyes as large and as dark as those his pencil had bestowed on the glorified saint of celestial melodies; and the serenely perfect and exquisitely-penciled arch under which they reposed; the glowing but refined complexion; the soft, faultless oval, containing all, might at first sight have seemed to stamp that beautiful countenance with effeminacy—but decision was marked in the Phidian profile; the expressive sweetness of the mouth intimated a depth of passionate affection not compatible with moral feebleness; and those remarkable eyes gleamed with a spiritual melancholy, blended with conscious power, that at once attracted and subdued. This face possessed, in short, that union of softness and force which we ascribe to angelic visages; realizing the fine saying that genius is bi-sexual; grave yet sweet in its repose; expressing in its smile a fascinating sympathy, as of a soul too loving not to participate in others' mirth.

Nothing, indeed, could be finer or truer than the manner of Mr. Fitzalan to his present companions. To a more than virgin spirit—that had renounced its chastest and most innocent desires—that had victoriously comprehended how to resign without a murmur the purest happiness—no difference between itself and such associates could be so great as that which was wholly spiritual and moral; but, as those endued with such an inward glory are the least conscious of it, doubtless it was some other disparity, of whatever sort, that gave to Fitzalan among his friends the air of one separated from them by an invisible barrier, and obeying other and mysterious laws.

CHAPTER II.

To such of our readers as have not, even in these days of universal travel, visited Rome, a slight sketch of the topography of the modern city will aid in forming a clear idea of the scenes described in this book.

The great northern, or Florence road—by which most Englishmen first approach Rome, after crossing the Tiber by the Ponte Molle, and passing through a long straggling suburb, enters the city by the Porta del Popolo, or Gate of the People. Immediately before entering, the traveler has, on his right, a large but mean building, the upper story of which is used as the British Chapel, no Protestant worship being tolerated within the walls; and on his left, a stone's throw distant, on the rise of a considerable eminence, the grand columned entrance of the Villa Borghese, the varied and beautiful grounds of which, by the liberality of the prince

y owner, are thrown open to the public as a carriage and pedestrian promenade.

Passing the gate, the traveler finds himself in a sort of open vestibule of the city, having on the right the Pontifical Dogana of the gate—a low building, in the two principal rooms of which takes place the Exposition already described in the first chapter; and on the left the church and Augustinian convent of Santa Maria del Popolo. The Piazza del Popolo lies before him, with its obelisk and fountains. Here, again, on the right, is but a low, crescent-formed wall; but on the left rise the terraces of the Pincian, planted with trees and faced with sculpture and architecture; while, on the side of the square opposite the gate, the most conspicuous objects are two churches of exactly uniform architectural design; and here, separated from each other by their porticoed fronts, radiate, fan-like, the three principal streets of Rome, of which each, in its whole length, commands the obelisk in the center of the Piazza. On the right is the Ripetta, running to the Church and Piazza of San Luigi dei Francesi, where Lady Alice Stuart and Clarinelle used to attend the Sunday vespers, and listen to the eloquent sermons of the Abbé de B. On the left is the Babuino, extending to the Piazza di Spagna, the fashionable center of the modern city. The central street, more than twice as long as either, is the celebrated Corso, the scene of the carnival. It is perfectly straight, and the pavé of an uniform width in its whole course; but the trottoirs, or side-walks, which it almost alone possesses, vary exceedingly, being in some places wide enough for ten men to walk abreast, and in others so narrow as not to admit the passage of one. It is flanked by fine and lofty houses and rich-fronted palaces, except midway of its length, where opens on one side the Piazza Colonna, an exact square, rendered imposing by the many-windowed and many-storied lateral front of the Palazzo Ghigi, and by the column of Aurelius towering in the center.

Between these three diverging avenues run numerous cross-streets, of which the greater part are narrow and unimportant, except the Via Condotti, which, departing from the Piazza di Spagna, directly opposite the great stairs called the Scalinata, crosses the Corso and Ripetta, and is continued, under various names, to the bridge of San Angelo. It is thus the principal avenue leading from the part of Rome inhabited by foreigners, to the Vatican and St. Peter's.

On the morning of which we speak ('twas about half-past one, P.M.) the entrance of two well-appointed traveling carriages—a chariot and berline—with four post-horses attached to each, excited some sensation at the Porta del Popolo. A courier behind the chariot handed a *Lascia passare* to the officer of the Doanne. It was satisfactory; but that functionary, with great politeness, signified the necessity for the carriages entering, just for form's sake, into the court of the Dogana, after which they would be permitted to proceed at once to the hotel. For this purpose the postillions were already beginning to detach the leaders. A personage from the interior of the chariot put his head out of the window—

"Eh! what's all this?" he demanded.

The courier leaped down from his seat, and advanced to explain.

"It is merely a form, Herr Baron, with which it is necessary to comply, notwithstanding the *Lascia passare*. We must just drive in here, and the gates will be shut upon us. I shall put a couple of scudi into the hands of the Doganiere, and we shall drive out again. It is merely a form, because they dare not take the money in the street."

The traveler cursed this "bore," adding, "Well, pay them, and have done with it."

The baron, whose coronet and arms were emblazoned on the chariot and berline, was a handsome man, of about five-and-thirty. As he descended from his chariot, to stretch his limbs during the inevitable delay, you perceived that he was tall. His long auburn hair, carefully curled, fell in equal masses on each side of his face, and, contrasted with a dark mustache, whiskers, and rich beard, rendered rather imposing his regular physiognomy; an effect much heightened by a massive white forehead, and large, sagacious blue eyes. His apparel was distinguished, without coxcombry. He was enveloped in a pelisse of fine dark cloth, reaching to the feet, with a large collar and cuffs of costly furs, and wore a Polish traveling cap of furred velvet. As the chariot rolled into the court of the Dogana, he followed it with an air of superb nonchalance.

And now the dashing up of three open carriages to the door of the Dogana attracted in another direction the crowd of idlers and beggars. Seven persons, of whom four were of what our polite laws term the worthier sex, descended, and entered the Exposition, talking as they went. This party immediately attracted the attention of the English in the rooms. The four gentlemen, all young men, were evidently English, and it was in that language that the party conversed; but two of the ladies, at least, had not an English air. One, apparently the matron of the party, was a singularly fine woman, of about five or six-and-twenty. Her dress was superb as her beauty; she wore an India shawl, and the most captivating bonnet.

"I don't think this particularly interesting, do you, Grace?" she said to one of her companions, when they had sauntered round the walls.

"If your ladyship will step into the other room," said a gentleman, who, on a gracious notice from one of the party, had joined it, and had just been presented to the lady he addressed, "you will find there the thing best worth seeing in the Exposition."

"Oh, there *is* another room! I had quite forgotten that. Let us go to it, by all means."

The way to the other room lay across the court of the dogana. The carriages of the herr baron nearly filled the little quadrangle, so that the ladies could not pass. The courier was disputing with the officer of the douane, while his master looked on, with a cynical smile.

"My master is the Baron von Schwartzthal, a nobleman of large fortune; do you suppose he would dirty his fingers with a petty smuggling of cigars?"

"Give him a couple of Napoleons, Carl, and have done with it," said the baron. "We are keeping these ladies in the court," and he raised his cap with respect.

"What an odd name!" said the lady who had previously spoken, eyeing the baron, without ceremony, through her glass.

The doganiere, who, in fact, had merely scrupled taking less than two louis from a rich baron, traveling with two carriages, was satisfied in a moment. The gates were thrown open, and the chariot and berline rolled out.

"What is the thing you like so much, Mr. Henry?" pursued the lady. "Landscape, or—?"

"'Tis a sacred subject, treated in the manner of the early Italian masters: a St. Cecilia."

"My favorite saint, and favorite style," said the lady. "Do you hear, Augustus? Mr. Henry says there is a beautiful St. Cecilia here. If it is very good, you must buy it for me."

"It is very good; better, a great deal, in my opinion, than any genuine cinque-cento in existence; and the painter is a young Englishman, too."

"Better and better. We must encourage our own art, you know, Mr. Henry. What is our young countryman's name?"

This question was asked in a clear tone of voice, and they had already entered the other room. The sculptor replied, in a lower key—

"His name is Fitzalan. I see he is here, and he is really worth your ladyship's looking at. There!—but he has turned away."

"If you know him, Mr. Henry, perhaps you will be kind enough to introduce him. I always like to know artists, if they have talent."

"I will mention it to him with pleasure, but I hope your ladyship will not be offended, should he decline the honor. He is the best fellow in the world, and a prodigious favorite with the brotherhood, but he sometimes declines the acquaintance of English people of rank in a very capricious way. But here is his picture."

"Beautiful!—beautiful! Oh, I must know the person who did this. And an Englishman, too! *Mon Dieu!* what a resemblance!" added the lady, in a low, startled voice.

"I see that Fitzalan is going," said the eminent sculptor with whom she had been talking. "I will stop him, and let him know your ladyship's wish."

"My dear Fitzalan, whither so fast? Here is the most beautiful woman in Rome, and the wife of one of the richest peers in England, wanting to make your acquaintance."

"Who?" and Fitzalan slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"Lady Beauchamp de Glentworth."

"Lady Beauchamp de Glentworth," murmured Fitzalan, striking his boot with his cane, irresolutely.

"Of course, you *must*. She is not a mere woman of rank, but a celebrated person, and *cidevant* embassadress, and a great admirer of the *cinqe-cento*, a Catholic, and all that. Oh, you can't avoid it!"

"Well, if I must, I must."

The sculptor led up Fitzalan, and introduced him. The young artist bowed low.

"I have been more delighted with your picture, Mr. Fitzalan, than I know how to express," said Lady Beauchamp, holding out her hand to him with graceful cordiality. "How very young he is!" she whispered to Henry, and turned again

to the picture. "Can it really be true that such a boy painted that?"

Others of the party expressed their admiration, and Lady Beauchamp introduced Mr. Fitzalan to her husband. The young lady, whom Lady Beauchamp had addressed as Grace, surveyed Mr. Fitzalan slightly, and turned away. A very tall, fair young man, who stood near her, bowed to him with great courtesy. Henry was surprised at the ill-assured, if not agitated manner of his young friend, whose *sang-froid* with people of higher rank he had often observed.

"Don't you think, my dear Fred," said Lady Beauchamp, in a low, softened tone, to another of the gentlemen, who was gazing at the picture with a perfectly absorbed look, that it resembles *her*?"

The gentleman addressed turned suddenly round, and his eyes rested on Fitzalan.

"This picture is for sale, I believe, Mr. —"

"Mr. Fitzalan," said Lady Beauchamp, quickly. "My brother-in-law, the Honorable Mr. Clifford, Mr. Fitzalan."

"I should like to buy it, at any price you choose to name," said Clifford.

Mr. Fitzalan turned abruptly on his heel, and walked over to the other side of the room.

"Your young friend is a little *brusque* in his manner. Is he offended at so simple a proposal?" said Lady Beauchamp, much surprised.

Mr. Fitzalan, however, returned, and, very quietly, as if he had done the most natural thing in the world, said—

"I did not mean to sell that picture, but, since you like it, and give me *carte blanche*, it is yours."

"And the price?" said Clifford. "If you will mention it, and give me your address, I will send you a check for the amount to-night."

"Oh, thank you! We will speak of it some other time. My mind is not made up what I ought to ask for it," said Fitzalan, gently. "The picture must stay a few days in the Exposition, and then I will have it sent to your apartments. My address you will find at Monaldini's. I have the honor to wish you good morning, Lady Beauchamp."

Lady Beauchamp looked at Mr. Henry.

"It is because you are strangers. Certainly, he has not been used to society."

"I like him, in spite of his *brusquerie*. He is a handsome puppy, and such a singularly melodious voice. Does he sing, I wonder?"

"Like a seraph. He has certainly a remarkable voice. Every body notices it."

"We must have him at our musical *soirées*," said Lady Beauchamp, smiling.

CHAPTER III.

"At what hour, Mr. Henry, am I likely to find Mr. Fitzalan disengaged?"

"Exactly at twelve. If you go earlier, he will probably be busy with a model, and would not see you. He never suffers any one to interrupt his work. If you go later, you will not find him, for, like most of the young men, he goes out at that hour for luncheon. Later in the afternoon again, he would still be busy,

though, perhaps, he would see you; but after dusk he is always out, dining, or drawing at the Academy, or, later still, at the rooms of some friend."

"The younger English artists are a little given to dissipation, I believe?" said Clifford.

"Oh, Fitzalan is not at all that sort of person. He is not a milk-sop either; our wildest fellows like him, but—" the sculptor hesitated—"the fact is, Fitzalan most nearly approaches to a perfect character of any that I have ever known."

"He seems to be a favorite of yours."

"Impossible not to like Fitzalan."

Agreeably to this advice, and having obtained the address at Monaldini's, Clifford arrived, precisely as the bells were ringing for *mezzo-giorno*, at a door in the Via Pontefici, one of the short streets running between the Corso and Ripetta. A steep narrow stair, but very clean and well lighted, led to a small landing-place, where his further progress was arrested by a door with a little wicket and iron knocker. There was no mistaking it, since there was no other on the stair, but a card attached below the wicket, bore the name, neatly printed, of ALFRED FITZALAN. Clifford knocked.

There was a sound as of the opening of an inner door, then the little wicket was lifted, and a clear, young voice said—"Chi è?"

"Forestiere."

"Who is it?"—"A stranger," or "Friend;"—a ceremony rarely omitted in Rome. The door was opened by a boy of about twelve years, a black-haired, black-eyed, dark-complexioned little fellow, dressed in a tunic of dark velvet, confined round his waist by a belt of patent leather, and to which an ample and very white linen collar gave an air of great neatness.

"Is Signor Fitzalan at home?"

"Sì, Signore."

"Can I see him? Here is my card."

"I will ask him. Please to walk in, Signor."

A flight of seven or eight additional steps, covered with a dark green drugget, led to a second door, which opened into a large, lofty, and well-lighted room. It was well furnished, too. The floor was laid with a thick, rich carpet, on which the warm sun coming in at both the windows, lay in bright, cheerful reaches. This is a matter of great importance in Rome. As Clifford sat down on a sofa of blue damask, placed at right angles with the fire-place, where a pleasant wood fire blazed on the hearth; he perceived that the apartment was a bed-room. White, embroidered muslin curtains shrouded the French bed, of polished walnut. This had a Marseilles quilt, a huge pillow, trimmed with lace, and fine bed-linen turned over the quilt, showing still the folds of the smoothing-iron; the whole white as snow. On the sofa were some cushions, covered with worsted-work in bright colors. The apartment contained a rose-wood piano, a guitar, and an instrument of feminine use—a harp. A glazed book-case, well filled; a music-case filled with portfolios and bound volumes; a table, where lay books of engravings, writing materials, and an open album; a large marble console between the windows, backed by a mirror, and supporting a pair of Etruscan vases, a curious candelabrum of bronze, and a reduced copy of a celebrated

statue; at the foot of the bed, against the wall, a table dressed as an altar, with a front of brilliant embroidery, and a linen covering, falling down at each end, and trimmed with very deep antique lace, having also two huge candlesticks of silver, with wax lights, a silver and ebon crucifix, and two slender ruby glass vases, filled with fresh and beautiful flowers; above the altar, an old picture of the Virgin and Child—the only picture in the room; and before it, a prayer-desk, with cushions of dark-blue velvet, supporting some superbly-bound books of devotion; these were the interesting details which Clifford rapidly observed.

In a recess beyond the fire-place, was a stair, which led to the room above; it was by this that the boy had quitted the room to inform his master of Clifford's presence, and by this that the artist now descended to receive his visitor. Mr. Fitzalan wore, in his rooms, a dressing-robe of green shawl, lined with amber silk, and a cap à la Raphael, of dark green velvet. He slightly lifted it in saluting Clifford.

"If you will sit here a moment, while my model is dressing, I will ask you into my studio, though I have little to show you at present."

"What a very cheerful room this is!" said Clifford, resuming his seat.

"It is very cheerful. I wish it were not only one. It serves too many purposes—ante-chamber, saloon, and bed-room, and I should be obliged to say, breakfast and dining-room, only that, luckily, and partly for that reason, I take all my meals abroad."

"You breakfast at a café, I suppose?"

"At the Café Greco, invariably," said Fitzalan, with an inimitable trill of the Italian R, "where, at seven o'clock, I am sure of meeting my chief friends. But, speaking of my rooms, they are the best in Rome for the price I pay, and for my purpose. I have a magnificent studio, and an artist must sacrifice every thing to that. This room, which I scarcely enter, except to sleep, is airy and sunny, and I have the staircase to myself. You must have passed a winter in Rome to appreciate the advantage."

"How is that?" said Clifford. "Is not this a palace?"

"Oh, yes; and contains very fine suites of apartments. The *portone*, leading to the grand staircase, is in the Corso. Mine is only a private exit of the suite on this floor, which is the third. 'Tis a pretty apartment enough—I wish I could afford to take it all, for it is scarcely too large for one. For a young married couple 'twould be just the thing."

Mr. Fitzalan rose, and threw open a glass door at the foot of the stair by which he had descended. The room beyond was dark.

"My dressing-room," he said, "and leads into the other rooms of this suite. Properly speaking, it should go with them; but, of course, I would not suffer any one else to have a room separated from mine but by a glazed door," said Fitzalan, with a smile.

Clifford had followed his young companion to the door of the dark dressing-room. "There is no window here, you observe, so the room can be of no other earthly use. I have often been advised to transfer my bed to it, but I can't sleep in a closet, can I?" And, without waiting for Clifford's smiling reply, he drew the

bolt of a door in the dressing-room, and, opening it, discovered a spacious and elegantly-furnished saloon.

"Come! In a place like Rome, every body likes to see all sorts of apartments," said Fitzalan.

The drawing-room opened, in one direction, into the prettiest bed-room, all sunlight and rose-colored curtains; and in the other the suite was continued by a boudoir, dining-room, and every thing that was charming.

"How temptingly clean and fresh it is," said Fitzalan. "Such a warm southern exposure, and at this height no neighboring houses to intercept the genial rays, without which Italy is any thing but a paradise!"

"Do you know the price?"

"If you take it for the rest of the season, 'tis but sixty scudi per month—twelve guineas, you know; a bagatelle, but quite beyond my purse," said Fitzalan, looking wistfully around.

"I am paying more, at the Europa, for an apartment not a quarter so good."

They returned to Fitzalan's rooms. A tall and very handsome woman, in the costume of the Roman peasantry, was descending the stair that led from the studio. Her air was lofty, even queen-like.

"Addio, Signor Fitzalani," she said.

"Addio; Grazie. I shall expect you again on Saturday. That," added Fitzalan, "is the most beautiful model at present in Rome. She always reminds me of—of—but no matter. Come up stairs."

Clifford was struck with the unembarrassed cordiality of his companion's manner, as compared with his haughty distance the day before, at the Exposition. Clifford had scarcely observed his features then, so much had he been absorbed in the St. Cecilia. He now noticed their spiritual beauty, in which he found a singular resemblance to that of Alice Stuart, or rather a startling identity. The voice, accent, and turn of expression were also so like that, at moments, his eyes filled with tears of tenderness at some remark that might be quite trivial. The young artist assumed in his eyes, an almost sacred character from this resemblance, of which his genius and what he had heard of his blameless morals seemed to make him worthy. The altar and prayer-desk indicated devout habits, that were another point of affecting similarity.

The studio was immediately under the roof, and lighted from above. It was like most studios, confused and shadowy; a wilderness of screens, draperies, easels and canvases, with endless casts, cartoons and studies. The boy who had admitted Clifford, was busy at a table, covered with colors, cleaning his master's pallet and brushes. A door standing open, looked out upon a small terrace, the studio being, in fact, built upon the leads of the house. Fitzalan closed this door. On an easel, to which Clifford's attention was naturally first directed, was a composition nearly finished—the Departure from the Sepulcher.

"The Entombment is a common subject," said Fitzalan, in a hushed voice, when Clifford had contemplated the picture for some time in silence, "but I don't know that any painter before has chosen precisely that moment. The body of our Lord is withdrawn from view; the

stone has closed the door of his sepulcher; symbolizing not only the mystery of his state as a departed Spirit, but that chilling veil which obscures the hopes of his followers. I wished also to express that moment of grief and amazement which all have experienced who have ever seen the grave close over what they love." He turned to his companion as if surprised.

The calm Frederick Clifford was in tears. Fitzalan glided to the boy still engaged in his work, touched the lad on the shoulder, and made him a sign. The boy plunged his master's pallet and brushes under water, and quitted the studio. Fitzalan returned to Clifford's side.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Mr. Clifford," he said, in a low sweet voice, "if I have unwittingly touched the chord of some painful memory."

Clifford turned his head, without changing his position in other respects, and wildly scanned the features of the speaker. As he looked, his own assumed an expression of acute anguish; at last, turning away again with an abrupt movement, he covered his face with both hands and sobbed aloud. The strong emotion of a man who ordinarily exhibits great self-command is proverbially terrible. Clifford's athletic frame was convulsed with the effort he made to control his passion of grief. He threw himself into Fitzalan's chair. The young artist, pale and agitated, tears also rapidly flowing, half knelt at his side, and attempted to take his hand. Clifford waved him off.

Fitzalan started up, and walked away with quick passionate steps, clasping his hands, and raising them and his beautiful eyes to heaven in apparent agony. His lips moved as in prayer, and then, becoming all at once calm, though mournful, and drying his tears, he resumed his place at Clifford's side, and, putting one arm round the neck of the latter said—

"I also have suffered—have cause to suffer still. Let us then be friends and brothers from this moment. Let me explain to you further my picture, as I was about to do, and the means I have contrived, amid all the despair and, alas! faithless sorrow—was it not so?—of the disciples and the weeping Marys round the closed tomb of their Lord, to hint the glorious resurrection that was to convert their sorrow into joy.

"Behind the spectator," continued Fitzalan, as Clifford, suddenly tranquilized, again gazed at the picture, "is setting the sun whose going down marks the commencement of the Sabbath. We note it by the long shadows projected far into distance. Nicodemus, who is already turning away, points out this circumstance to the women absorbed in their grief, and warns them that it is time to depart and rest, according to the commandment. Is it possible to forget that the second rising of the unseen luminary shall behold the Lord risen indeed? Opposite, and visible to us, rises over the holy eastern hills, the Paschal full moon, the very symbol of Easter and its sacred joy. See, from the unnoticed chrysalis on the rose blooming so near the kneeling Mary Magdalen, a Psyche is disengaging its gold and purple wings. Here, in a crevice of the rock that forms the tomb, is a bird's nest with eggs, to which the mother is returning to brood during the night. You know how popular

with the early Christians, in reference to the resurrection, was the type of the egg. Clambering over the side of the rock, the white and crimson flowers of that creeper—the colors of innocence and martyrdom—are closed for the day, but they will open again to-morrow. Yonder, in the background, the ‘gardener’ is casting seed into the ground so long as the light breaks on the tops of the furrows, although in his cottage the Sabbath lamp already twinkles (as it is written—‘in the evening withhold not thine hand’), and in what hope? And I have even ventured,” added Fitzalan, in a voice of thrilling tenderness, “to represent one of the women—Mary, the wife of Cleophas—as one of those ‘who are with child in these days;’ for as a child from the womb shall He come forth from His grave, the First Born from the dead. Dear Clifford, shall not these symbols and mute prophecies of Nature herself, reprove us when we sorrow, over whatever disappointment, as those who have no hope?”

“Are you an angel descended from heaven, or the spirit of—?” Clifford did not finish the sentence, but he looked up in the young artist’s face with a softened and humble expression. He returned Fitzalan’s gentle familiarity by a warm, brotherly embrace. The young artist colored deeply.

“Yes, let us be brothers, dear Fitzalan, as you have said; though you can not know that I am worthy of that rarely gifted mind and celestially pure imagination which you evidently possess. But at least I appreciate your splendid powers, and have a heart to reverence the religious elevation of your character; and the difference of our years may give me an advantage over you that may serve to counterbalance a superiority that in other respects I deeply feel.”

“Ah, I have heard something of you, too,” said Fitzalan, with a smile that made Clifford start. “*My* genius (if you please) is impassioned and creative. *Yours* compels you to tranquil but fruitful meditation, and to a beneficent, though, if possible, unnoticed, energy that sways in order to bless your fellow men. ‘Tis the manlier nature; and I, having a great deal of the woman in my mind, as well as in the delicacy of my frame, feel that you are exactly the friend I want, to look up to and confide in;—as much, that is, as it is allowed me to confide in mortal man.”

“There are reserves even in the closest friendship, my dear Fitzalan.”

Clifford examined once more, and more attentively, the picture which had so moved him.

“Do you compose your figures from models?” he asked.

“Never. I study models to augment my knowledge; but these forms in my picture are not models to me; they are Joseph and the Marys, as if I had seen and known them individually.”

“And that divine Magdalen,” said Clifford, “which is so like your Cecilia, yet so different! In the study of whose face did you learn to imagine such a countenance, so thoroughly ideal, yet to me having all the sweet individuality of a portrait?”

“It is my recollection of a sister,” said Fitzalan.

“I had nearly forgotten,” said Clifford, that

my business with you was to pay for the picture I have bought.”

Fitzalan at first wished to make him a present of it, but this Clifford would not hear of; so the young artist named a price rather high, though not more than the picture was fairly worth.

“I really want money,” said he, “therefore, since you *will* pay for it, you shall have the credit of munificence.”

CHAPTER IV.

CLIFFORD feared that he was detaining too long his young friend, who, he knew, went out for luncheon. Fitzalan, with some vivacity, confessed to being nearly famished, but proposed that Clifford, if not otherwise engaged, should wait till he had made some changes in his dress. They would go and lunch together.

They descended to the lower room. Fitzalan’s boy was gone. He took a long paper candle-lighter from the mantle-piece, and lighted a candle at the wood fire blazing on the hearth.

“Amuse yourself with my guitar or piano for a few minutes—if you are musical,” he said, “or look at my books.” So saying, he withdrew into the dark dressing-room, and closed the door after him. It had curtains of muslin, and was further masked within by one of dark-green cloth. Clifford heard the sliding of a bolt, and the rings of the last curtain grate over the rod.

“Is he afraid I shall intrude upon his toilet?” thought he, with a smile at this extreme precaution. He walked to the book-case, more from curiosity to see what was Fitzalan’s favorite reading, than any other motive. The books were all in the white Roman binding, so justly famed, and he could read the titles on the backs without taking them down. There were some celebrated works on Art, which he knew only by name; *Lives of the Painters*; the Italian Poets; the *Promessi Sposi* and other classics; the chief English Poets; Göthe and Schiller; the French classics; and lastly, many Roman Catholic books of devotion, and *Lives of Roman Catholic Saints*, in French and Italian. These last sent him to the prayer-desk, to examine the books lying upon it. He had previously observed their exterior—dark-blue velvet and massy gold or silver; and one of them with a crucifix in relief, and another with a Nativity in gorgeous enamel. Was Fitzalan, like the artists of the German school to which he seemed rather to belong, a Roman Catholic? He had spoken of being intimate with Overbeck. But the volume with a Nativity was an English Bible: that with the crucifix was the Common Prayer, and of two small volumes that remained, one was indeed a work on the Spiritual Life by a Gallican bishop, but the other was Sutton on the Sacrament.

While musing over this, his eye was caught by a dark object lying on the bed. He approached and drew the curtains slightly, and saw that it was a crucifix, placed there, from its formal position, evidently with design. Tears started again to his eyes. But, at that moment, Fitzalan came out of his dressing-room.

If Clifford was precisely then feeling that the young artist had the morale of a woman rather than of a young man, the sight of Fitzalan was calculated to dissipate such an impression. It was impossible for any one to have more completely the air of a Parisian exquisite belonging to the very highest *monde*. From his hat and rich curls to his glittering boots, all was perfect; and his carriage was as gracefully nonchalant as his costume was distinguished. He carried his furred pelisse in one hand, and, laying his cane upon the table, said, in a clear ringing voice—

"Is it cold this morning, Clifford? Shall I need to wear this thing, do you think?"

"'Tis the *tramontana*; I would advise you to put it on."

Leaving the rooms, which Fitzalan locked, putting the key in his pocket, the young men turned from the Via Pontefici into the Corso, and then went by the Della Croce to the Piazza di Spagna. Fitzalan was cheerful, even gay; but as Clifford, whose temper was less mercurial, remained rather serious, though he smiled at his companion's lively sallies, the latter checked himself. "Does my nonsense annoy you?"

"Not in the least. Pray don't let my gravity impose a restraint upon your spirits. 'T would be sad indeed if, at your age, life were become as serious a thing as it is for me."

"I am happy," said Fitzalan, "because I have found a friend. Not but that I have many friends, but they are not like you. Come, you are not so much older than I, and I hardly think you can have suffered so much. Indeed I am sure you have not. I can not mistake the nature of your grief. You have lost a friend—a mistress. She was taken from you cruelly. I have heard something of that. It was a dreadful thing. She was more to you than you can express, as I can well believe; and you have lost her. But I, Clifford, have lost all—all!"

"Yes," he continued, seeing the surprised look of his companion, "in one moment—a moment, too, when I thought myself happy beyond the usual lot of human nature—I was deprived of all that I loved on earth; father and mother, brothers and sisters, friends by whom I was idolized, and of one dearer than all the rest, one as dear to me as she whom you loved could have been to you."

"Good Heaven! Fitzalan, how?" exclaimed Clifford, with a start, and gazing earnestly at his companion.

"How? my dear Clifford," said Fitzalan, looking him in the face with a singular and painful smile. "Without telling you all my history, which, perhaps, some day I may, I could not give you an idea. And I have not told you, by any means, the worst—exile, and poverty, and obscure struggles for existence; every evil short of death and dishonor, and even those escaped as by miracle—escaped more than once."

"And you bear all this with such fortitude, and you are so young, too!" said Clifford, deeply moved. The quiet and open manner of Fitzalan and his ingenuous look commanded instant faith; they were irresistible, and if he had said in that tone that he was a seraph sent down to love and suffer in human shape, you would have believed him.

"My lot has not been without its compensations," said Fitzalan, "of which your friendship I trust, will be one."

They now walked on in silence till they reached Nazzari's, where Fitzalan turned in. In the small inner saloon of the *café*, a table was spread with a single cover, at which he seated himself, and ordered a plate for Clifford. The latter observed that his companion was attended by the waiters with unwonted zeal.

"My first winter in Rome," said Fitzalan, "I found great difficulty in getting any thing to eat, but now I have arrived at a perfect system."

As Clifford smiled, he went on.

"I had really like to have died of indigestion in learning how to live on their acid bread, before I found out where to get that which, if not so white, is as sweet as any made in England. And then, being very poor at that time and unable to economize in any thing else, I was forced to dine at a *trattoria* frequented by artists, where there were precisely four dishes, vegetables included, that I could manage to eat. You may understand, that when I had dined on these for a fortnight consecutively, I had conceived for them a very considerable disgust. It was, besides, so dirty that often when I went quite faint with hunger, after painting all day, the sight of the tables made me sick, and I was obliged to get out into the street as fast as I was able, and content myself with a biscuit and glass of water till bed-time.

"This would have killed me if it had lasted much longer," pursued Fitzalan, in reply to Clifford's expression of pity, "and, to make matters worse, my money fell short. I could not go even to the *trattoria*. For a month I lived literally on bread and water. Fortunately, I had credit with my baker. The case was really desperate. I had raised the little fund, which was now terminated, by pledging at Paris some jewels that I possessed, and I now was obliged to think of taking my watch and a few other trinkets that I had retained, to the Monte di Pietà. I actually went thither for the purpose, where I was obliged to wait my turn among a miserable crowd that made me ashamed of myself to be even seen with them, and at last I was offered a sum so trifling in comparison with the value of the articles—with which they were not acquainted, and so inadequate to my necessities, that I went away in despair, having had all the mortification and the other annoyances for nothing. My only conceivable resource now remaining was to sell a picture that I had just finished. But it was now summer, and there were no foreigners in Rome. My rent-day approached, and I had not a baocco. At that time I lived extremely retired, and had made no acquaintances. I bethought myself of my other resources.

"There were my voice and my knowledge of music, which I thought I might turn to account; but my religion was a bar to my singing in churches, and from the theater I recoiled. To get pupils in Rome was, for a foreigner without introductions or friends, quite impossible; though I tried it through the English consul, but without stating the necessities that led me to wish it, for that would have placed me in the position of a mendicant at once. This application was fruitless. But my physician—for I had

been so disordered in the winter that I was obliged to employ one—to whom I had also mentioned that I should like some pupils, and that I would engage to teach any instrument, or language, or accomplishment whatsoever, had the shrewdness to divine that it was something like a case of destitution. Perhaps he inferred it from the fact that, though confessedly not recovered, I had ceased to visit him, and thought that the best way to procure the recommencement of my fees, would be to get me some employment. He was a Scot," said Fitzalan, smiling, "canny and kind-hearted.

"At all events, he interested himself in it, and I presented myself to a Roman princess, to whom he had recommended me for her daughters. But I soon found that my youth and looks would entirely preclude my being engaged to teach young ladies."

"I can easily believe it," said Clifford, "But pray tell me how you got out of this scrape, for though I know you are comfortable now, I feel very anxious."

"Why, it was by being completely cornered, so as to have but one possible way of escape, which of course I attempted, and with success. My landlady, not a bad woman perhaps, but necessitous, was urgent with me to pay her. She did not treat me very well; she had formed suspicions of my honesty, which rendered it intolerable for me to remain any longer in her house. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to try borrowing, and I went to the consul, who, you know, is also a banker. I told him frankly my situation, and that I must have money or be stripped of every thing, perhaps imprisoned. I was perfectly sure of being able to repay it with interest, one day or another; meanwhile, I could give two pictures as security; not a very satisfactory one, but all I had. His behavior was really most kind.

"I will lend you what you want, Mr. Fitzalan," he said; "I see that you are a gentleman. Pay me at your convenience."

"He did more than this. He furnished me with the means of going to Florence, where I should be safer from sickness during the hot season, and have a chance of disposing of my pictures. This journey, one of the most delightful I ever made, proved the means of getting me out of my difficulties. I see you listen with interest to my story."

"Oh, pray go on, my dear fellow. We are very well off here, and it is past the hour when the *café* is frequented, so that we shall be free from interruption."

Fitzalan's narrative, up to this point, had been interrupted by the successive serving of soup, a beef steak, and other items of a somewhat substantial luncheon, of which he partook with keen appetite, and which Clifford found exquisite in point of cookery. A choice bottle of a favorite red wine of the country assisted the digestion of this meal.

"I had taken the cabriolet of the vetturino's carriage," pursued Fitzalan, leaning back upon a cushion, and sipping his wine; "the interior was occupied by a party of German artists. There was one of these young men whom I recognized as having met in traveling, two years before, in the north of Italy. Heinrich Lehmann was his name. He did not remember me in the

least, except as having seen me occasionally at a *café*. What a time we had of it, to be sure! The weather was perfectly delicious; the road (we went by Perugia) a succession of the most characteristic Italian scenery. We stopped to see every thing; walked up all the hills; made sketches of all the picturesque bits of building or landscape; and when we rested at noon (for at least four hours), at the small Italian cities which crowd the region through which we passed, contended with each other who should make the best drawing of the prettiest peasant girl, or of her wild old hag of a mother. For they grow, if I may say so, ideally, not vulgarly, ugly, the Italian women of the lower classes, as they grow old. The kind-hearted Germans were like so many brothers to me. They taught me a great deal, Lehmann especially; and, as I had not misapplied my time during the spring, the things I did pleased them.

"This journey, which lasted, with the stops we made, ten days, improved my health very much, and my sanguine temper revived with the slight amelioration of my fortunes, and with the recovered influence of friendship and sympathy, for want of which I had literally pined. A deep depression under which I had labored in Rome, vanished; and, from that time, sustained by trust in the Providence which has always watched over me, and which I was sure would bring good out of evil, I have been able to maintain my cheerfulness. But, after spending about a fortnight in Florence with my new friends, I found myself again suffering for want of the grand air, and constant exercise, and the stimulus of travel; so, as I had not the means of paying for a conveyance, I closed with a proposal of Heinrich and his friends, to accompany them on a pedestrian tour, to explore the region of the Apennines. This occupied two months; was full of excitement and wild adventure; for we were overflowing with youth and spirits, and got into all sorts of scrapes for the pleasure of getting out of them again. I got back to Florence early in October, perfectly restored to health, and invigorated both in mind and body for the work of the coming winter. I was peniless again, but not discouraged. Heinrich Lehmann and his wife (have I forgot to say that Mrs. Lehmann accompanied us on a donkey during all this time?) took an apartment in the Casino Nobile, two bed-rooms and a salon, looking upon the Piazza della Santa Trinità; and they insisted upon my taking the bed-room which they did not want. We breakfasted together every morning, at the *Café Donin*, and dined at the *Aquila d'Oro*; spent all the mornings at the Pitti, or Uffizi, or in the painted cloisters of the convents, and worked in the afternoon. In the evening, Lehmann and I drew from a cast, while his wife read to us. He was cashier, and paid all our expenses, of which he was gentleman enough to keep an exact account, so that, afterward, I was able to reimburse him in full.

"We spent thus about six weeks, and then came on to Rome for the winter, making up a party of artists to take an entire *vettura*. This time we took the Sienna road, which is not so pleasant, but was new to me. In Rome, also, we wished to take lodgings together, but were unable, from the difficulty about studios; and it was thus I came to get my present rooms.

"But before I could venture upon such a step in the impoverished state of my finances, and while I was sleeping every night on the sofa in Mrs. Lehmann's parlor and sharing their table, an important event occurred. I sold my first picture. It was bought by a rich American who was collecting a gallery, and who, being entirely ignorant of art himself, trusted implicitly to the judgment of a young painter, his *protégé*, whose acquaintance I was fortunate enough to make through Lehmann, who knew every body.

"I got a hundred guineas for my work, and if I felt proud and delighted I leave you to imagine. It was the first money I had ever earned in my life, and I had learned what it was to be in want of it. My American gave me a commission, and I felt richer than Lord Lucie, who, by the by, is my condescending patron," said Fitzalan, with a sudden smile. "So is the king of Wurtemberg; and I get on very well, though my money, somehow, runs through my fingers as fast as I get it."

So saying, the young artist, having summoned the waiter, by ringing his tumbler with a spoon, paid for their luncheon, and, giving the man a Napoleon, said, "I have sold one of my pictures this morning, Don Giovanni, and that is your share."

"I am curious to know how you manage about your diet," said Clifford, as his companion rose. "You have told me that you breakfast at the 'Greco;' I see that you get a capital luncheon at Nazzarri's, but where do you dine? Not at the 'Lepre' or 'Scalinata,' I take it."

"Hygeia forefend!" said Fitzalan, lifting up his hands. "No; I dine at the table d'hôte at the Europa: your hotel, is it not?"

"I will join you at dinner to-day," said Clifford.

CHAPTER V.

THE world is on the Pincian Hill. It may not be amiss to say that the summit of this elevation is leveled in a well-planted esplanade, the principal portion being laid out in a square of gardens and broad walks, the four sides of which form a carriage promenade. The principal ascent is by a zigzag from the Piazza del Popolo. The display of carriages is doubtless not to be compared with that in Hyde Park, but some compensation for this may be found in the beautiful and wondrous scene which the Pincian commands, and in the very name of Rome. On two sides, the great terrace overlooks the rich sylvan scenery of the Villa Borghese, and that superb combination of foliage which can scarcely be matched in Europe; on the third, or west side, spread beneath the eye the gray roofs and innumerable domes, towers, and columns of the Eternal City, backed by the line of the Marian Mount, sloping down to the Vatican: and at this hour, when the sun is setting behind St. Peter's all is suffused with a misty, golden light; the vast form of the unrivalled dome rising in the distance like a purple mountain, against that burning center of glory. Following the slope of the horizon, we reach the blue line of the Campagna, like a distant glimpse of the ocean, beyond even the ruined Thermæ of Caracalla.

On this side of the terrace is an ample prom-

enade for pedestrians, where it is the custom for gentlemen to assemble to reconnoiter their female acquaintance, and where, on a fine evening, ladies are much in the habit of quitting their carriages to walk. The peculiar feature of this, as compared with the fashionable promenades of other cities, is the number of ecclesiastics in their varied costumes, in which, however, the dark, flowing robe is predominant.

The same party which we have seen on the morning of the day previous at the Exposition, are now walking on the terrace, attracting, as always, the attention which rank and wealth generally command, but which is never withheld when these accidents give *éclat* to great personal beauty in women. At every turn they made upon the terrace this distinguished party were encountered by another, of very different pretensions, consisting of some of the artists who have been already described. It had become known that Mr. Clifford had bought Fitzalan's picture, and Lady Beauchamp, in passing, had acknowledged the young painter among his friends by a gracious bow and smile. He was appealed to by the rest to point out the different personages.

"The gentlemen walking with Lady Beauchamp are Prince Hohenlinden, and Edward St. Liz. Lady Beauchamp has a great many friends abroad, especially in the diplomatic circles. The prince, I know, used to admire her exceedingly."

"She is very sweet upon him now, I think," said a long-haired, mustached youth in a black velvet Greco, richly-braided, and a high black hat, fiercely slouched. "Is she as intact as she is beautiful?"

"Lady Beauchamp is devoted to her husband," said Fitzalan, "and a most generous, loyal character. So I have heard from one who knew her well."

"What St. Liz is that? The Clarence family, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is Lord Clarence's brother: excessively poor, of course; and a celebrated dandy," said Fitzalan.

"He will marry some rich girl," said the velvet Greco, "who would like to be an Hon. Mrs. and an earl's sister-in-law."

"I dare say," Fitzalan laughed.

"What a pretty girl, Macpherson, is that walking with Lord Beauchamp!—a sort of face that takes me amazingly," said the Greco.

"That is Mademoiselle Clairvoix, Lady Beauchamp's sister," said Fitzalan, slightly blushing.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Fitz," said, in a kind tone, the artist who had been addressed as Macpherson. "She may be Lady Beauchamp's sister, for aught I know, but she is married. That is the little St. Liz, as they call her."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Fitzalan, with vivacity. "She is married!" and he turned quickly to follow Mrs. St. Liz's figure with sparkling eyes.

"I should think you had been in love with her, Alfred," said Macpherson, with a meaning smile. This artist seemed very familiar with Fitzalan.

"Well, Miss Clifford is the beauty of the three, no doubt," said the Greco.

"Lord Stratherne seems to think so," said Macpherson.

"What a tragical business that was of his sister," said a youth, who had not yet spoken. "Do you remember, Mac, about two years ago, at this time?"

The speaker was a good-looking, rose-blond young man, of the middle height, with a downy cheek, gentle blue eyes, and chestnut hair, cut in the English fashion. He wore a dark-blue paletot, well fitted to his slim figure, and the narrow edge of a straight shirt-collar peeped above his carefully tied, bright blue silk cravat.

"Yes, the unfortunate Lady Alice Stuart," said Macpherson. "She had been just engaged to your Mr. Clifford, Fitzalan. He was dreadfully cut up, I have heard."

"No wonder!" said the blond, blue-eyed youth. "The most beautiful girl I ever saw!"

"Where did you ever see her?" asked Fitzalan, with some interest.

"Oh, I have seen her in a great many different places and times; but the last was at the Opera, just before I left England. I went on purpose, to tell the truth. Got a stall-ticket, you know. There was a story going the rounds then about her and Clifford: not a syllable of truth in it. They were already attached (it all came out after her abduction), but she refused to marry him, even with her parents' full consent, because he was a Roman Catholic: and no doubt it would have been said that he turned in order to marry her, had it not been that his change was not publicly avowed until her unhappy fate was finally ascertained."

"That was bringing good out of evil, at all events," said Fitzalan, in another under tone; "but what was her unhappy fate of which you speak? She was carried off, I know; but what became of her afterward?"

Fitzalan spoke with evident curiosity.

"Why, there was no news at all of her for months," replied the same youth, looking at Fitzalan, and then it came out that the vessel had foundered at sea, and Lady Alice perished in her. She was murdered, in fact."

"Yes?"

"The crew got off in a boat, in which three men and a boy, the only survivors, after suffering horrible privations, were picked up by a French ship, and carried into Bordeaux."

"I thought it was Havre," said Macpherson.

"No, it wasn't. It was Bordeaux. I ought to know," said the youth.

"Well?" said Fitzalan, patiently.

"Well, that infernal villain, Matson, who was principally engaged in the affair, when he found his vessel sinking, actually locked up the unfortunate girl in the cabin. It was generally supposed that she was firm in refusing to marry him—for that was his object, of course—and that, in revenge, he determined to abandon her. The men could hear her shrieks as they got from the ship's side, and some of them wanted to put back and take her in, though the boat was already crowded; but Matson, who was one of those saved, was in the stern with cocked pistols, and threatened to shoot the first man that stirred. In a few minutes, the vessel, which was already settling by the head, went down before their eyes."

"It is horrible," said Macpherson. "Fitzalan is as pale as death."

"How was so much as this even found out?"

"By the other two men, who were saved with Matson. They came to claim the reward offered for bare news of Lady Alice."

"And Matson—and the boy?" said Fitzalan.

"Oh, the boy! Why, you see, there could be little doubt that the boy was really a girl, Matson's mistress, and who assisted in the abduction of Lady Alice, by concealing the ruffians in the house. This girl certainly went off with them, and there was no other way of accounting for her. What makes it the more probable is, that the men, though they agreed that the lad came on board that day from St. Valerie in male attire, and that they never suspected him to be any thing else than a boy, still could not be positive. He always staid in Matson's cabin till the vessel sunk; and in the open boat, in which they were out together fourteen days and nights, lay in the stern, wrapped in Matson's cloak, never speaking to any one but him, and bearing the calamity, which was only too good for them all, with a patience that hardly any thing but a woman is capable of. However that may be, this lad, or girl, or whatever he was, was all but dead when they were picked up; but Matson, as soon as he was landed in Bordeaux, having plenty of money, and regular papers, started immediately for Paris, traveling post in a carriage that he had purchased, and took the boy with him—more dead than alive, as every body said. Beyond Paris they could not be traced, and it is supposed that they escaped in some disguise, or with false passports, to America."

"You remember all these circumstances very well," said Fitzalan.

"I know the family," said the young man, coloring a little. "At least my father knows the duke. And I shall not very soon forget Lady Alice. That last night that I saw her at the Opera, is pretty deeply imprinted on my memory. Your Mr. Clifford was there too, Fitzalan, sitting between her and the duchess. They seemed really made for each other. The duchess was reading her libretto or using her opera-glass nearly all the time, and Clifford talked to Lady Alice. How brilliant she looked! not gay, you know, for her troubles had commenced, poor girl!—but all the nonchalance of *bon ton* could not be proof against the gaze of so many eyes. And such a glance and smile as she gave him once!"

"We are making discoveries to-night," said Macpherson. "I think you must have been a little bit in love with Lady Alice. You have quite brought the tears to Fitzalan's eyes by your description."

"We are neighbors of her father's, though humble ones," replied the blue-eyed youth; "and I had once the honor of dancing with herself at St. Valerie, at a ball in the holidays."

"Ah! you have danced with Lady Alice Stuart, have you?" said Fitzalan, earnestly regarding him. "Pray, how long ago was that?"

"Six years ago. She was not more than fourteen. I certainly did fall in love with her desperately. Such is life," he added, with the air of one half ashamed of his own romance. "She never thought of me except for the twenty minutes perhaps that I was her partner, and I have thought of her ever since. If she were

alive and could know it, she would only laugh at me."

"I don't think so," said Fitzalan, gently. "I think she would feel flattered and gratified."

Meanwhile, the gay equipage of the Baron von Schwartzthal had appeared on the Pincian, and its noble owner, after a few turns round the rectangle, had descended for a walk. He also encountered both the parties already mentioned, and, at the sight of Fitzalan, started, raising his hat as if involuntarily. The young artist, who was deeply preoccupied, did not observe him, and the baron walked to the parapet, whence he appeared to reconnoiter both parties with interested attention.

CHAPTER VI.

THE *table d'hôte* of the Hotel d'Europe in the Piazza di Spagna, was at six o'clock. Clifford, when he did not dine with his brother, or with Lord Stratherne, who had apartments in the same hotel, had preserved the unsocial English habit of dining in his own rooms; in favor of which, however, there are many things to be said.

Clifford had not, like his brother in circumstances somewhat similar, succumbed to his cruel, and we must say, less merited misfortunes. If any thing in the character of our friend indicated the need of so terrible a lesson, it was that reliance on his own forethought, energy, and boundless resources which was perhaps inseparable from the possession of such extraordinary powers acting upon the natural self-confidence of youth. To have been outwitted, foiled, and disarmed, prevented from even striking a blow, or risking life, in the defense of her whom he would willingly have died to save, inflicted a pang severer than the loss of Alice considered as a misfortune personal to himself.

He had the deep mortification of thinking that he had suffered her to become engaged in a situation where she had no choice but to sacrifice herself to his safety. An officer, he said to himself (and Clifford, with his other marvelous accomplishments, was a soldier)—a military man, he said—who had risked the force under his command in a position similarly exposed, would have been justly shot as a traitor, or cashiered as an incompetent. Revolving such thoughts, he had prostrated himself on the earth in agony, and could he, by penances, at which the self-torturers of the Ganges would have turned pale, have rolled back time to the moment before Alice had entered that accursed dwelling, he would have embraced them with joy.

Then came the idea, incessantly present to him, of her possible sufferings. No single reality, however terrible, could have equaled in horror the thousandfold fate that his fertile and analytic imagination developed and pursued with an inexorable logic into every detail of misery and degradation to which her pure spirit and hallowed person could be subjected. If a confidence in the firmness of Alice, in her resolved purity, in her quick resources, her lofty courage, and even in the vigor and agility of her disciplined limbs, in some degree sustained him, it was only

as a malefactor is sustained by stimulants to the point of sensibility under the rack, that he might be more effectually tortured by the irresistible suggestion of methods, diabolically infallible, by which all these means of resistance might be neutralized. Such was his condition till the fate of Alice became, as was supposed, certainly known.

It was hardly possible to entertain a doubt that she had ceased to live. The two witnesses of the tragedy were examined apart by Clifford himself and her father, assisted by the most practiced professional sagacity. The slight discrepancies in their narrative confirmed its general truth. They had both seen Lady Alice; had personally assisted in her abduction, saw her mount their vessel's side and enter its cabin. They never saw her again, nor did any of the crew, though all had heard her last heart-rending shrieks. A wild idea, and, perhaps, really irrational, presented itself to Clifford, that there might have been a substitution, and the boy who escaped had been Alice herself. The men were tried on this point in a variety of ways, and it appeared, unhappily, only too evident that they were certain of the identity, though not of the sex, of the seeming boy who had gone from Bordeaux to Paris in the company of Matson. Clifford made a journey to the former city to satisfy himself more effectually; and all hope died away on obtaining the *signalement* of Matson's companion, as remembered by the authorities and others who had seen her, and on hearing that, though ill and nearly helpless, she had possessed her senses in the most perfect manner. Neither at Bordeaux nor on the road had she been prevented from communicating freely with others, and it was clear that she had suffered no constraint.

Finally, soon after Clifford's conversion became known, he received a communication which for him and the family of Alice set this painful question at rest. On the very day of the abduction, arrived for Clifford, at St. Walerie, a letter, which had followed him from Glentworth, and the purport of which was to warn him that such an attempt was in contemplation. It was from Lady Fitzjames, and led to a continued correspondence. Augusta believed that her brother was concerned; of which she could supply many circumstantial proofs; and she was desirous that Clifford should act on this idea with promptitude. Clifford placed the marquis, then living in Paris, under a secret surveillance. It was Augusta, too, who chiefly sustained him in the idea, which she adopted as soon as he suggested it, that Alice had, perhaps, after all, escaped the wreck. But now, she wrote him from Paris that she had seen Matson, and could no longer doubt that Lady Alice was no more. The girl, Mary Hervey, had also died, in consequence of her sufferings in the wreck. It was of no use to send him the legal proofs of her decease, because she was described in them by a false name. When eighteen months had elapsed after such a communication from one whom he had strong reason for trusting in the premises, it may readily be conceived that few things could bear more completely the character of a fact in the mind of Clifford than the death of Alice Stuart.

By the world it was always believed, and the provisions of her brother's will which contemplated such an occurrence, had been carried into

effect. Lord Stratherne succeeded to Bromswold; a legacy amounting to not less than one fourth of the personalty, estimated for duty at a million sterling, was paid to Lord Wessex; and the rest was held to accumulate for the younger children of the duchess.

On the day that Clifford assumed for Alice the deepest mourning that he could have worn for a wife, it was observed by the anxious circle at Glentworth that the death-like rigidity of his muscles was relaxed. For months he had walked among them like a specter. His form had bent and wasted to the eye under the influence of a mental conflict to which there seemed no end. It had been scarcely possible, except in the occasional fire of his eye, and the resolute, brief command of his blanched lip, to recognize that Clifford who had once seemed the incarnation of an energetic yet meditative vitality. He now rallied rapidly; soon softened into melancholy, though he never wept; at least his tears were never witnessed by others. He confessed to Madame de Schönberg, that he was relieved from the thought, that had brooded over him like a phantom of terror and anguish, that Alice herself was still suffering.

Whatever she had endured, were it the most cruel outrages, she was freed from them now; and she was at peace. It was not in the power of villainy to defile her virgin soul, nor could there be a doubt that she was numbered with those approved and crowned, who wear stainless garments and wave palms of holy triumph.

It remained only to grieve for himself—his life and heart forever widowed; but he would not yield to a selfish sorrow. He renewed his adhesion to the Church of England, and in the autumn, after the publication of his brother's marriage, took up his residence at Clifford Grove, where he devoted himself to carrying out the plans which Lady Alice had developed to him in their last never-to-be-forgotten interview.

Frederick Clifford did not wear in society, which he by no means avoided, a smiling countenance; neither did he obtrude a gloomy one. It must have been an acute observer who detected any very marked difference in his demeanor, except such as the admitted rules of decorum required. But there was something singularly depressing to those who shared his intimacy, in his sad and equable cheerfulness. The tranquillity of his spirit had survived the wreck of his affections. And, in the midst of an activity now prompted by benevolence, now commanded by duty, he thirsted always for solitude and the painful repose of memories stored with sorrowful pleasures. He endeavored, it is true, in religious meditation, by reading the books of which Alice had been fond, by addicting himself to the devotional practices to which she had been habituated, to unite himself by spiritual ties to her whose image was never wholly absent from his imagination, whose spirit seemed to hover over and consecrate his life. It was not wholly in vain; but the affections are made for real objects; they demand the daily food of seeing, hearing, and handling the object beloved; they die, or live not healthily, when reduced to the airy sustenance of thought. Even the love of Him who is by nature invisible, requires to be substantiated by fixed and visible media, and

Christ, to the believer, is still present in the body. How much more is this true, when the object beloved is not only a creature like ourselves, but one necessarily contemplated in a relation which belongs essentially to this world! Since Frederick did not cease to love Alice, since his very passion for her was unquenched, both necessarily became more morbid—one of those chronic moral affections which never cure of themselves, but go on getting worse and worse till they destroy the life of the soul.

It was seeing this that made Louise, the second autumn after the loss of Alice, urge her husband to go to Italy for the winter, and induce Frederick to accompany them. They made up a cheerful party, not too numerous. Clarinelle and her husband made it a wedding tour. Clifford had learned from Mrs. St. Liz, how much her mistress, as Clarie still called her, had loved Rome, and what had been her favorite resorts and occupations. He spent his time meditating in the churches which she had frequented, and lounging through the galleries where she had studied, or among the ruins where she had sauntered and sketched. The peculiar sentiment of Rome exercised over him its soothing power. He intimated his determination to remain till after Easter, and Lord Beauchamp accordingly took apartments for the winter, but of which his brother declined accepting a part. They allowed him to do as he liked. The position of the brothers was exactly the reverse from what it was when this story opened. They had been a month in Rome when they met Fitzalan at the Exposition.

Meanwhile, dinner is not waiting at the Europa, for the table d'hôte, as we observed, is at six, and it has just struck the quarter.

CHAPTER VII.

CLIFFORD descended to the *salle-à-manger* before the hour, in the hope that Fitzalan, in whom, for the first time, he found a companion more agreeable than solitude, would be early. Another difference between him and Augustus, Frederick would not have found the society of the most captivating woman, in the least a consolation.

There was not a soul in the dining-room. Clifford threw himself on a sofa, and was buried in a reverie, less somber than usual, when the young artist entered, followed by one of the waiters, to whom he was talking in Italian, in his sweet yet ringing voice. He was taking the man to task, and Clifford drew back.

Fitzalan wore his cap of dark-green velvet, and an ample cloak of violet cloth, thrown over his shoulders in the stately Roman fashion that has come down from the *gensque togata*. He threw it off, and the man took it with great respect. There was something deliberate in the slightest movements of Fitzalan, which attracted Clifford's attention, and involuntarily he watched him. He hung his cap on the hat-stand, and sauntered to a mirror, and surveyed himself carelessly in the glass, slightly arranging his curls with his white-gloved hand.

He was in full evening costume, as Clifford observed. A white waistcoat, somewhat long-

waisted, with delicate basquines, set off the dreamy elegance of his shape; the beautiful linen, gently swelling over the bust, was confined by coral studs; the white "tie" was irreproachable. Mr. Fitzalan did not wear the *pantalon collant*. His black trowsers were cut in the extreme of the existing French mode, which the lions of the modern Faubourg had agreed was *bon ton* for any thing but a ball: of an almost oriental amplitude, and slightly plaited at the waist, they fell loosely over the delicate Paris boot of silk and patent leather, and augmented, by their fullness, the wearer's apparent height. An eye-glass, hanging by a chain of auburn hair; a Venetian watch chain straying over the white waistcoat; an embroidered cambric handkerchief, which he shook out of fold as he advanced to the fire; and, as he now drew his glove, a diamond ring, that challenged attention to the small, exquisitely-formed, snowy hand on which it sparkled, completed the evening exterior of Fitzalan.

"You look more like the Cupid of a salon, my dear Fitzalan, than a young Raffaele," said Clifford, advancing. "Perhaps you are right. In these days of affectation, genius and enthusiasm may show a real modesty by attending to things that they would naturally neglect."

Fitzalan started, and colored, at seeing Clifford, but recovered himself instantly, and held out his hand with a look of pleasure.

"I didn't know you were here. You speak of my dress: I have reasons, certainly, for taking pains with it."

Fitzalan looked at Clifford as if contemplating his countenance with secret delight; his own attitude, meanwhile, being of a beautiful ingenuousness. The attitude is, indeed, as expressive as the face: meanness and cowardice, conceit, pride and rigid selfishness have their own; so have single-heartedness, and courageous love and virgin candor.

"I can't help thinking," said Clifford with a tender smile, "what an exquisite woman you would make."

Fitzalan laughed. "It's not the first time I have received such an equivocal compliment. At Paris I was more than once taken for a woman in disguise."

"That must have been amusing," said a gentleman in a frogged and braided Polish frock-coat, who now joined them. "Pray, M. Fitzalan, do us the favor of relating *cette petite histoire-là*."

Fitzalan immediately told a story which was amusing in itself, and narrated with a witty simplicity.

Other persons came in. The bell rang for dinner. Two chairs had been turned down together for Fitzalan and Clifford. The latter thought he detected a shade of displeasure on the countenance of his other neighbor, whom this arrangement separated from the young artist, but Fitzalan instantly bent forward, and with a captivating grace that put all right, introduced Clifford to Count Pototski. They sate at one end of a long table where the *habitués* of the house were collected. There were several other foreigners of various nations, some of high rank, and an English peer with a great historical title, and an estate at nurse for many years. This nobleman sate on the other side of Fitzalan,

and seemed disposed to engross his attention. Clifford observed the facility with which the young artist baffled Milord's manœuvres, and kept the conversation general. "He is perfectly used to society," thought Clifford. Count Pototski retailed Fitzalan's historiette to a French lady who sate opposite.

"M. Fitzalan is too much of a gentleman to be a lady," said madame, to whom the young artist frequently appealed.

The conversation led away from that. Lord ——— thought that it was impossible for a woman to personate a man so as not to be detected by an acute observer. Fitzalan differed from his lordship, and said there were too many cases to prove the contrary. Every day, in England, cases turned up of girls acting as sailors, deceiving all their companions, not for a short time only, but for years. Clifford adduced the Chevalier D'Eon as an instance of a parallel mystification, and mentioned several classic and chivalric examples of a successful personation such as Lord ——— disputed. Lord ——— thought these cases only showed the obtuse observation of the lower class of people, or else were instances of malformation.

"You mean, then, where the sexual characteristics are perfectly preserved in the individual?" said Clifford, to whom Fitzalan's look appealed.

"Exactly," said his lordship, "where the voice and gait, and shape, as well as the features, are really feminine."

"I have seen male parts performed by actresses, where the illusion was complete," said Clifford. "For instance, Romeo, by Schroeder Devrient: and yet the voice and figure were not attempted to be disguised. The reality of her passion triumphed over these difficulties."

"That's what I mean," said Fitzalan, with warmth. "It is quite consistent with the personation which I say is possible, that there should be the most distinct perception of the feminine character. My successful actress in real life, as on the stage, should disdain the poor and indelicate expedient of disguising the form of her sex; she should cling as a true woman to its moral and physical attributes; and yet, if she were really mistress of herself, she might, by the power of her soul, effectively deceive all who knew her, in spite of their senses, and in spite of their judgment."

"Are you engaged any where for this evening?" asked Clifford. "If not, Lady Beauchamp begged me to ask you to take your tea with them. I always do. There will be nobody there but my sister, and the St. Lizes, who are in the same house, and the young Earl of Stratherne, who is very intimate with us, and whom I am sure you will like."

"I am afraid that I infringe upon a rule that I have made to myself," said Fitzalan, coloring, "though, perhaps—yes, I will go." He spoke hurriedly, and as if deciding on a dangerous experiment.

During the rest of the dinner Fitzalan was abstracted; helped himself freely, and ate nothing, drank off two or three glasses of wine without being apparently aware of what he did. His eye and cheek became intensely brilliant. "At what hour will Lady Beauchamp expect us?" he said, as the fruit was passing round.

"Oh, we may go immediately, if you like,"

said Clifford, horribly fatigued with the table-d'hôte, and longing to see his young friend in a more congenial circle.

"Well, let us take some coffee first."

The ladies quitted the table, candles were brought, and cigars. A gray-haired Scottish gentleman, with a grand, stern head, worthy of a Covenanter, took out a fragrant box of fine tobacco, some of which he rolled up in an oblong slip of yellow silk paper, of which he drew several from his pocket-book. When he had done, he offered the cigarette he had formed to Fitzalan, with a sweet, kind smile. Fitzalan took it.

"Isn't it tempting?" he said to Clifford, putting the cigarette to his beautiful mouth. He then returned it. "Thank you, my dear Mr. Stuart; you know I don't smoke." At the same time he rose.

"You are going!" exclaimed Lord —, while a cloud of white smoke issued from the nostrils of Mr. Stuart —. "Why, it's not an academy night."

"No, but the wine was stronger than usual, or your cigars are not so good. Something affects my head."

"Really, how pale you are!" said Clifford, as his friend threw over his shoulder a sweeping fold of the violet cloak.

"Let us get into the open air. There I shall feel better."

It was a clear, cold night, the tramontana blowing, the streets of Rome white and dry. The dark-blue vault was crowded with stars, which, in the depth of the Piazza di Spagna, you see as from the bottom of a huge quarry. The twin towers of the Church of Santa Trinità dei Monti, crowning the giant stairs of the Scalinata, loomed faintly against the sky. The friends slowly ascended the stair. About half way up, Fitzalan complained of faintness, and sat down upon the steps.

"Lean on me, my dear fellow, or lie down; that's the way to get over these turns."

Fitzalan feebly objected; but the stairs were dancing around and beneath him, and the piazza below seemed to be rising into the air, and he yielded, partly to necessity, partly to Clifford's kind urging. It was one of the broad stone piers of the Scalinata, which, buttress-like, divide the parallel flights of steps, and where, in the day-time, the little Piffereri and similar gentry bask in the sun, and demand a mezzo-bajocco of passers-by.

"I am really ashamed," said Fitzalan, "to have such a weak head. I should be accustomed to the smoke of tobacco, with all my German friends. I fancy that I drank more wine than I was aware."

"You will soon get over it," said Clifford, in a particularly cheerful tone. "I had once the good fortune, Fitzalan," he added, "to save the life of one who afterward became very dear to me. While she was recovering from a swoon, she lay enveloped in a cloak, as you are now. Looking at your pale face, by this light, I could believe that it was she herself. Indeed, you would hardly believe that I spoke soberly if I were to say how much your face resembles hers. I mention it that you may understand with what deep fraternal tenderness I love you. Don't be afraid to rest boldly upon me. Thank you—you

give me pleasure—nay, wait till you are perfectly recovered. You are very well here, and if you rise, the dizziness may return."

Fitzalan scarcely resisted the gentle violence of the affectionate arm that held him in a firm, but tender embrace. The infrequent lamps of the piazza, and the stars, faintly illumined his features, no longer pale, but glowing with deep emotion. There might be there some ingenuous shame; but certainly love and happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I wonder Fred is so late this evening," said Lord Beauchamp.

"I am afraid Mr. Fitzalan won't come," replied his wife. "They say he is so capricious."

"It's more likely that they are sitting over their wine and cigars. It is a habit to which young artists are sufficiently addicted."

"Oh, I shouldn't think him at all that sort of person, and Fred never smokes."

"Does he not?" said Lord Stratherne, significantly.

"He may take a cigar with you, occasionally, Lord Stratherne. He is very complying. But he never had the *habit* of smoking, I know," said Lady Beauchamp.

"He detests cigars, but he has told me often that he has a hankering for the hookah."

"I should not mind that he smoked a hookah," said Mrs. St. Liz, looking up from her worsted-work, "but I should be very angry to see Mr. Clifford with a cigar in his mouth."

"Very sorry, you mean, Clarie," said her sister.

"Mr. Clifford' has a mouth quite too handsome to hold a cigar," said Mr. St. Liz, giving a new fold to his Galignani.

"So he has," said Clarinelle, "but that is not what I was thinking of."

The room was lighted by an antique cresset of bronze suspended from the ceiling, and which shed a brilliant light upon a marble copy of the Cupid and Psyche, on a pedestal. Grace Clifford was sitting on an ottoman, with a low form before her supporting the paper on which she was making a drawing from this group. Lord Stratherne sat in an arm-chair near Miss Clifford, watching a little her progress, but more often studying her own marble-like but beautiful features, or the dark, voluminous, and glossy coils of wreathed hair, which a comb of cameos supported like a crown at the back of her finely-shaped head. Grace now took part in the conversation.

"It's a pity, Louise, that you were obliged to ask this Mr. Fitzalan to join our private circle. A perfect stranger, and an artist! Not the sort of person that we are accustomed to receive in this way."

"He is a genius, and a gentleman," said Lady Beauchamp.

"An alliteration passes with you for an argument: I am stupidly literal. I never knew any geniuses that were not disagreeable, except Fred, who has not the air of being one at all. You yourself spoke yesterday of Mr. Fitzalan's brusque manners; but if he were the most polished being in existence, that's no reason why

we should make him one of ourselves the very first thing."

"I have heard you say, Grace," said Mrs. St. Liz, "that you enjoy so much these quiet evenings."

"So I do," said Miss Clifford, with a faint blush. "For that reason I regret that the introduction of a stranger is going to destroy their character."

"Yes, but it is for your brother's sake that we have these quiet evenings."

"'Tis needless to finish the argument, Clarie. I would admit the Dey of Algiers, or General Tom Thumb to our party, if Fred took a fancy to have them."

"Your brother is not a person who takes fancies," said Lord Stratherne.

"That is what surprises me in this sudden and extreme liking for Mr. Fitzalan," said Grace, looking up from her drawing and turning her head, but not so as quite to meet Lord Stratherne's eye, her own bent on the carpet with an awakened, thoughtful air.

"I think," said St. Liz, with the manner of one who presents a solution which should satisfy every body, "that the proper thing is, when Mr. Fitzalan comes in, to pursue our own occupations as if he were not present."

"That is what I intend," said Grace Clifford, resuming her crayon.

There was a slight fracas in the adjoining room; the door was thrown open, and Mr. Clifford and Mr. Fitzalan were announced. Lady Beauchamp rose to welcome the latter, and her husband shook hands with him cordially. Lady Beauchamp immediately introduced him to Mrs. St. Liz, who made the most graceful inclination of the head, without rising from her work. Mr. St. Liz, sitting a little apart in an easy chair, went on with his Galignani as if he had been in a *café*. Lord Stratherne quitted the side of Grace Clifford and spoke to her brother, who introduced his friend.

Talk of the nervousness incident to making one's entrance into a large party of persons who are your superiors in birth or fashion, or in whose society you are simply new! It is your small, quiet, domestic circle of fine people that is the ordeal. The eyes and ears of five or six practiced observers, all, in appearing to notice nothing, were really taking cognizance of the young artist's slightest word and gesture; and with an unfavorable prepossession on the minds of all except Frederick Clifford. Possibly, even Clifford was not free from anxiety.

The manner of Fitzalan, however, endlessly varying, presented now neither the abruptness which had surprised Lady Beauchamp at the Exposition, nor the felicitous representation which had marked it at the *table-d'hôte*. A slight sarcasm was perceptible in his self-possessed bow and smile, and well-selected words. Yet the look that he fastened on whoever addressed him, particularly on Lady Beauchamp, was of an earnestness that riveted Clifford's attention, and revived affecting recollections. Frederick's eye, once so formidably observant, traced anew the waving outline of Fitzalan's form with a vague tenderness. Tea was brought in, and the conversation became animated. St. Liz laid aside his newspaper. Grace pursued her work unremittingly. A cup of tea

was placed for her upon an ottoman by Lord Stratherne, who ever and anon found himself at her side, to overlook her drawing, or exchange some whispered remark.

"Upon my word I think he will prove an acquisition. His manners are perfect, and you hear what interesting things he says. Knows Rome perfectly, too. You must ask him to look at your drawing."

"What? A great artist like Mr. Fitzalan? He would think me very silly. If he wants to see it he can ask."

"Perhaps he will, for he is not at all afraid of us, I perceive."

"What sort of looking person is he?" asked Miss Clifford, taking a new pencil.

"Of a most singular and spiritual beauty."

"Really! Is he dressed like a gentleman? Few artists I have seen are."

"In the foreign style, but very refined."

"Don't you perceive something peculiar in his voice?" pursued Grace, after a minute's silence.

"It is sweet and clear—almost like a woman's."

"Quite, I think; but that is not what I mean. I have heard boy's voices that were higher pitched. Mr. Fitzalan's reminds me of your sister's. 'Tis like the ringing of silver bells, or, sometimes, the sweetest chord of a harp. I have not looked at him once since he came in, and partly on that account. The illusion to me is so perfect. I can fancy she is there, and that if I were to lift my eyes I should see her."

"It is true; but I had not thought of it. I have been thinking all the time that his countenance singularly resembles hers."

"Ah! that is frightful!—I feel as if it were—" Miss Clifford paused and slightly shuddered.

"You had better let me introduce him."

"No, no; pray don't."

"Why not?"

"What you have been saying makes me nervous. Should I find the resemblance to your sister striking, I feel as if I should shriek, and make a ridiculous scene."

"My dear Grace, I never knew you (forgive me) so absurd before."

"I don't wonder at Fred's being fascinated. Ah, that laugh again!"

"I shouldn't be surprised were you to fall in love with him, after all."

"What is he saying to Clarinelle? Talking about her work. What can a man know about the honey-comb stitch? I declare I believe he is going to show her how it is done."

Clifford was now talking to Lady Beauchamp; the latter delighted with his unwonted cheerfulness, and praising, aside, his young friend, with enthusiasm. Fitzalan had turned round to the *petite* St. Liz, and was deep in the mysteries of embroidery and worsted-work. He first criticised the colors she was combining—that was fairly in his way—but gradually becoming more interested, as Clarinelle pulled out of an immense pannier, endless pieces of beautiful work, some partly finished, he pushed along an ottoman, and, sitting down by her, with the familiarity of a woman, declared that he was fond, to a weakness, of ladies' work, and begged her to

show him how this and that was done. St. Liz, seeing this confounded puppy, as he internally termed him, almost making love to his pretty little wife, looked annoyed, and made the oddest replies to Lord Beauchamp, with whom he had been discussing a piece of news in Galignani. It was the more vexatious, because Mrs. St. Liz, puzzled for the precise English word she wanted, had recourse to her native language, and Fitzalan, whose eye sparkled, immediately began to converse in French, with so many easy elisions and voluble phrases, that St. Liz could not understand above half of what was said by either. His indignation was at its height, when he heard Fitzalan quite distinctly *tutoyer* Mrs. St. Liz, and call her *la Petite*. Clarinelle blushed and slightly turned her head, to see if her husband noticed it. Fitzalan appeared to recollect himself, and addressed her instantly, with a smile, as madame.

At this juncture, Grace Clifford laid down her pencil, and turned fairly round to look at the young artist. Fitzalan bowed. Grace bent her head and said, with a fine smile, "When you have taught Mr. Fitzalan, Clarie, as many new stitches as he can carry away in one evening, I hope he will look at my drawing."

Fitzalan rose instantly, and approached her. Grace Clifford, who hardly ever deigned to suffer her eyes to rest upon the person of a man, surveyed him with an almost unmaidenly stare. She took up her untasted cup of tea from the ottoman placed at her side, and invited him to sit.—"You will then see the group from the same point of view."

Fitzalan took a crayon and a bit of bread, and began to correct the drawing rather freely. "May I?" he said.

"You will sensibly oblige me. My object is to improve."

Grace drank her tea, watching that snowy hand, with its faint blue veins, taper, rose-tipped fingers, and delicate nails like shells of pink and pearl, guiding the crayon, and reproducing, with infallible certainty, one of the matchless curves that described the form of the Psyche; and then she regarded his face and figure. She gave the cup, when she had finished it, to Lord Stratherne, with her sweetest smile. "Do get me another, Courtenay." Lord Stratherne obeyed. Grace leaned forward.

"I have failed to discriminate sufficiently the male and female form in the two figures, have I not?" she said, in a low voice.

"This line in the Cupid is more different from the corresponding one in the Psyche than you have made it."

"I want practice, but my eye is tolerably correct. I can tell a man from a woman," said Grace, smiling.

"That should not be difficult. You are fond of drawing?"

"From the antique. The forms are so chaste and noble. You, I suppose, have studied a great deal from the life, Mr. Fitzalan?"

"I belong to a school, I suppose, that has always neglected it," said Fitzalan.

"The idea of studying the nude at all is a repulsive one," whispered Grace.

Fitzalan gave Miss Clifford a look of surprise. "The divine Result of Art," he said, "hallows the indispensable means."

"But are they indispensable?" faltered Grace, drawing back with a blush and look of doubt.

"Yes," said Fitzalan, with an evanescent gleam of triumph in his star-like eyes, "for it is necessary to know what nature is, in order even to depart from her with safety and power."

Lord Stratherne, returning with the cup of tea, observed, with surprise, the faint excitement marked on the countenances, both of his mistress and Fitzalan. He imagined that the latter, whose style with Mrs. St. Liz had struck him as indicative of considerable temerity, had been guilty of some impertinence, and he would have remained by the pair, but Grace, thanking him for the tea with that indefinable coolness which he well understood, and then addressing her new companion in a confidential tone, he took the hint at once, and walked haughtily away. Fitzalan, without making any more corrections, continued to look from the group to the drawing, and from the drawing to the group. The face of Miss Clifford wore a very dubious expression.

"Are you aware, Mr. Fitzalan," she said at last, in an indifferent tone, "That my brother has given up his rooms at the Europa, and taken apartments in the — Palace, on the same floor, he tells me, and communicating with yours?"

Fitzalan's face became instantly of the most vivid crimson.—"I was not aware of it certainly."

"Now, I am sure," said Grace, who had fixed her eyes upon his changing countenance.

Lady Beauchamp advanced to them. Fitzalan turned pale, and gave Miss Clifford a glance of entreaty. Grace fell to sipping her tea with the spoon.

"Shall we have some music now?" said Louise.

"Pray let me finish my tea first. Mr. Fitzalan has one thing more to tell me. Perhaps Fred, meanwhile, will open the piano," she added, as her brother also approached.

"Your friend seems to enchant every body," said Lady Beauchamp, as she seated herself at the instrument and struck a chord. "Before you came, she was lamenting the threatened intimacy." It was perhaps as well that the piano now sounded in those preternaturally sensitive ears of Frederick Clifford.

"I don't wonder that the rest are deceived," said Grace, "but I am so no longer."

"I can neither confess nor deny what you seem to suspect, Miss Clifford," said Fitzalan, with a deep sigh and look of exhaustion, "even if I rightly apprehend it."

Grace, before the young artist could prevent her, had placed her hand gently on his heart. Fitzalan caught it with a sudden impulse, and pressed that courageous hand against a woman's agitated and overflowing breast.

"Let us escape from the room," said Grace.

"No," said the pretended Fitzalan. "It is useless, indeed, to attempt further concealment with you; but if you love me, dearest Grace, or think you owe me any thing, keep my secret."

"Till it may be broken to them? Oh, Alice! how can I help betraying you by an instant embrace."

CHAPTER IX.

LADY BEAUCHAMP had sung. Fitzalan, having approached the piano, complimented her; Louise looked for Grace to join her in a duet, but it was discovered that Miss Clifford had left the room. Lady Beauchamp begged that Mr. Fitzalan would oblige them. She had heard of his skill and wonderful voice. The young artist bent down and whispered in her ear something at which she laughed, saying, "You are a very charming person all the same."

Fitzalan took the seat which she surrendered to him, and said to Clifford, with the same sarcastic, though not unkind, smile which had occasionally wreathed his lip during the evening, "When I was in all my troubles that I told you of, the director of the papal chapel offered me three thousand scudi a year and my title, to be reconciled to the Church and take minor orders. You know Cantarini, the principal soprano of the Sistine Choir? He is quite a friend of mine—one of the very few who visit me at my own rooms, our love of music and our voices being the bond. I will sing you now a solo of Allegri that at present no organ in Europe, I fancy, but his or mine could do justice to."

With this preface, Fitzalan first imitated marvelously the deep-toned antiphonal chanting which is vulgarly called the Lamentations, and then, after a pause of a minute, began to pour forth a strain of pure and pathetic melody, such as one could hardly hope to listen to this side Heaven. When he had ended, every one present—even the cool St. Liz—was in tears. Without giving any one time to say a word, he rose from the instrument, bowed a good-night to Lady Beauchamp, and quitted the room before even Clifford could spring from a sofa to conduct him.

Fitzalan passed rapidly an ante-room, where a dozing lackey had hardly time to rise and bow; then a library, where, on one side, as he advanced, was a door ajar. The next room was the first ante-room of the suite, where he had left his cap and cloak. He hastily resumed these articles, but, instead of following the footman in waiting who was about to precede him to the door, he waved his hand to him imperiously to resume his place, and, turning back as if he had forgotten something, re-entered the library. He went to the door that stood ajar. It opened into one extremity of a long narrow passage, carpeted with green drugget. On one side were windows that must have looked into a court, on the other, a smooth blank wall; at the opposite extremity another door, suspended over which a lamp with a reflector illumined the passage. Fitzalan, without an instant's hesitation, flew down this corridor, with a light twinkling step, of feminine eagerness. The door at the further extremity opened as he advanced, to admit him, and closed instantly when he had entered.

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room were discussed the appearance and manners of their visitor.

Lady Beauchamp repeated the whispered remark of Fitzalan, at which she had laughed; and the rest laughed, too, except Clarie, who blushed, and Clifford, who, in fact, had overheard it, and now merely remarked—

"He has consummate tact."

"I dare say; but how does his volunteering

such a piece of information to me prove it, my dear Fred?"

"He knew that the minute his back was turned you would tell it; which, naturally, was what he wanted."

"You are as saucy as he," said Louise, affectionately.

"Saucy or not, I hope we shall very often have the pleasure of his society," said her husband.

"Doesn't it strike you, though, that, for a first acquaintance, he is a little too familiar?" said Mr. St. Liz.

"That is the goodness and frankness of his heart," said Clarinelle. 'Tis the best child in the world, be sure."

"Lord Stratherne is silent," said Louise. "Is he as jealous as Mr. St. Liz?"

"I am not jealous in the least," said St. Liz.

"I am not ashamed, when it is a question of such singular powers of fascination, to confess that I am," said the brother of Alice.

Lord Stratherne took leave presently. In the ante-room he had put on his paletot, and was lighting a cigar—Lord Stratherne was fond of smoking in the open air—when he observed under the console a particularly small pair of elastic overshoes. Nothing could be prettier than they were, and they must be Fitzalan's. On his carelessly inquiring of the servant if such was the case, it came out also that the young artist had not yet quitted the house. Lord Stratherne with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of surprise. He desired the man to fetch him a glass of water. The lackey disappeared.

The young earl picked up the little overshoes, returned quickly to the library, and went to the door by which Fitzalan had made his exit from it. There was no one in the narrow passage. He was at the other extremity in a moment; deposited the chausses at the door, and, returning, closed and locked that which communicated between the passage and the library, leaving the key on the outside; and was in the ante-room before the servant.

As Lord Stratherne took the glass of water which the latter presented him, he pointed to a new Roman scudo, with the head of Gregory XVI., lying on the console, and said, "Monsieur Fitzalan leaves you that."

CHAPTER X.

THE room gave the lie to the notion that comfort is not to be had in Italy. The capacious rosewood wardrobe and commodes, the snowy toilet-tables, with their delicate and sparkling furniture, the mirror and swing-glass, the curtains, thick carpet, rich hearth-rug, the bright wood-fire sparkling on the hearth, offered an interior that would have rendered cheerful a howling winter's night in the north.

Fitzalan and Grace Clifford stood in the glowing fire-light, their arms clasped round each other's waists: each half supporting the other's form. Grace was speaking.

"No, Fitzalan, since so it is your pleasure to be called—and really in this dress it's not so difficult—it is cruel to try to fetter me with a promise."

"But can not you believe me when I say that if you refuse me, you do merely by that strike a new blow at the happiness of one who has already sufficiently suffered."

"Show me how this is? Let me not be acting in the dark. Can it be that you have resolved never to know us more? I can understand and sympathize with such a resolve, Alice, if there is a cause for it," added Grace, with a searching and lofty look.

"I have been treated cruelly, shamefully," said Alice, with excitement, "and by one who should have died to protect me from such injuries."

"This is the corner room," said Grace, in a very low voice, as Alice looked around; "and the other two sides are enfiladed by my bed-rooms and closets. You may say what you like, without the least danger of being overheard."

Alice inserted her fingers under her fringe of dark curls, and, disengaging some secret fastening, flung the false chevelure on the floor. "Do you know me now to be Alice Stuart?" she cried.

"That beautiful hair!" exclaimed Grace, bursting into tears. "You have preserved it."

"It would have grown again, even had I cut it," said Alice, smoothing the bandeaux with her hand. Then, with a sort of passion, she untied the braids which were coiled at the back of the head. Like lightning her delicate fingers flew along the plaited gold till the whole mass fell in sparkling waves over her shoulders and bosom. "Is it in woman," she said to her companion, "to hide any thing like this, without a motive?" When Grace implored her to tell all, she sank upon one of the low seats, laid her head upon her knee, and wept passionately.

"Will you promise, at least," she said at length, "never to reveal what I have to tell you?"

"Yes, *that* I promise."

"You know," said Alice, while her friend sat down by her, and took one of her hands in both hers, "you know that that wretch, Matson, forced me to go with him, by threatening to shoot your brother from the head of the stairs in the house where we were surprised. I have no doubt that he would have done it. Also, to obtain the privilege of not being touched by their hands, I had to promise that I would not attempt to escape. Matson said they had no time for ceremony."

"Imagine then, that, as soon as we were beginning to gain decidedly upon your brother's boat, Matson opens a packet containing boy's clothes, and tells me that I must immediately put them on instead of my own; enforcing his command by the assurance that so long as I complied with his directions, what I most valued, and probably had most fears on account of, was entirely safe. This was humiliating enough; but I would not parley with him, and I determined to submit in every thing, not contrary to my conscience, rather than give a pretext for violence. I had to make this change of dress protected from view merely by the curtains of the awning. I found it much easier to effect without exposure than you would suppose. It was while I was left by myself for this purpose, that I drew the curtain and made the last signal to Frederick, till I lost sight of him and his boat altogether."

"What I thought of in arraying myself in this disguise, was the advantage it would give me for escape, or self-defense, should occasion offer. I had a pair of roomy blue trowsers, and a sailor's jacket; a printed shirt, a bright silk scarf for my neck, a glazed hat, lamb's-wool stockings, and leather shoes. Every article fitted exactly, and I began to see why my wardrobe had been plundered. There was false hair, too. As soon as I was dressed, the curtain opened, and a boy, as I at first thought, dressed exactly like myself, as I instantly observed, came under the awning, and desired me to go out the same way that he came in, and pass forward. I obeyed, and found Matson, who requested me, in a careless tone, to sit down, pointing to a place on the bench, where he sat managing the tiller-ropes. The boat's crew were pulling, and in this way we came to his vessel. I went on board as a boy, and, in a minute, my late double came up the side, dressed, to my great horror in the clothes I had just relinquished, and, attended by Matson with an air of great respect, entered the cabin, whither he desired me to follow. I perceived immediately the jar of an engine, and, in fact, we were already under way, by the aid of the newly-invented screw."

"You may imagine," continued Alice, "the feelings with which I saw night approach. The thought of what my family and your brother were suffering on my account, was more afflicting than the terrible prospect before me. I spent nearly all the time in prayer—not on my knees, Matson would not allow it. I endeavored to offer my patience, under such treatment, as a sacrifice to One, who I hoped would accept and reward it. The sea was like a lake, and we steamed away through the fog all the afternoon. Occasionally individuals of the crew came into the cabin where I was, and, at last, Matson desired me to go out on deck. He was clearly a sailor; acted as captain, and was obeyed by every body with the greatest promptitude. By night the fog had cleared away, and there was wind enough to make it worth while to set all the sails, and we began to dash through the water, the sea beginning to roll. Our endless yachting had made me a capital sailor; it was the same to me as being ashore."

"Shall I confess that, in spite of my very serious unhappiness, the thing began to wear an aspect of excitement and adventure that irresistibly removed my depression. Leaning over the vessel's side after night-fall, watching the stars and the white-capped, though darkening sea, hearing the flutter of the canvas, and the rush of our progress, observing those forms of brutal and violent men, in whose power I was scattered here and there about the deck, silent, or conversing in low tones, I felt all the romance of the situation, without ceasing to be sensible of its more painful excitement. The wind kept rising as the evening wore on. The vessel pitched with the swell, enough to make it needful to walk with care. About half-past eight, Matson requested me to walk into the cabin, and I was introduced, for the first time, into the inner one, where Mary Hervey, wearing my clothes, was a voluntary prisoner. I found two other men present, and the door was locked."

Alice stopped, and covered her face with her hands.

"I soon recognized one of these men," she resumed, with a slight shudder, "by his voice, as one of those who had taken part in the first attempt upon my liberty. It was the same who had that morning been Frederick's prisoner. He was now dressed as a clergyman, in cassock, gown, and bands. Conceive my terror! Matson desired me to sit down at a table, and inspect the evidence which he laid before me, that this wretch was a priest in full orders. In fact, he was what is called a Fleet-Parson, a thing of which I had never before heard, but which Matson explained, before his face, with malignant cynicism. In short, he gave me my choice—how can I tell such things, dear Grace!—he gave me my choice between marriage and violence. That miserable priest, in his peculiarly harsh and unpleasant tones—the third man, more brutal in appearance still—and Mary Hervey, in the garb of our Sisterhood of Mercy—signified that they were ready to support in any way the master-villain.

"I covered my eyes to shut out the sight of that man and woman, whose costumes, in such a scene had an effect at once grotesque and terrible. I was calmer while this frightful scene was passing, than I am now in remembering it. I thought that the intercession of spirits, and the ministry of angels would not be wanting to my innocence.

"We can not give your ladyship much time for consideration," said Matson.

"I do not believe," I said, "that you are wicked enough, Matson, to execute such a threat."

"At that, they all rose. I sprang up, too, and entreated them first to hear me. Not dishonor itself, I told Matson, still less the wicked and vain threat of it, would induce me to profane the marriage vow as he required. I offered to make them all rich for life if they would restore me to my friends. Whatever he had promised the others, or others had promised him, I would double. As I proceeded, there sate upon each of the others' countenances, to which I successively turned in my agony, an expression of cruelty and licentiousness that I don't know whether it filled me with more fright or shame. Matson alone seemed irresolute; but the priest, with an oath, asked if he was going to let a girl turn him round her finger; Mary Hervey, with a horrid little laugh, ridiculed his hesitation; he gave them the order to seize me, for which, it seems, they waited;—"God of Mercy!" I exclaimed, "Save me, for I put my trust only in Thee!"

"The vessel had already given a lurch or two, and these words were scarcely out of my mouth, when a quivering shock, that racked its timbers, terminated in a sudden capsize, that reversed the position of every thing movable in the cabin. My assailants were hurled violently against the side, and the vessel lay on her beam-ends. The table saved me, though I was nearly thrown over it headlong.

"This was the first fury of the gale, and the commencement of our rapid wreck. The three men rushed on deck, and then they must have recognized, one would think, a divine judgment. The first sea that swept over us, as the vessel righted, carried away the priest. Clinging to the companion-way, I saw his form, distinguished

by the dress, borne past on the wave, and heard his hoarse blasphemy. For four-and-twenty hours we scudded under bare poles. By that time she had sprung a leak, mainly owing to the new propeller, which had been got into her with a view to this very enterprise. On the third day, the men being worn out and the water gaining rapidly, the wind still high, and a heavy sea on, Matson came to me in the cabin, and told me that we were sinking. They were going to take to the boats. He added, that I must promise, and confirm it by an oath on all I held sacred, to maintain my present disguise, to observe secrecy as to the past, and generally to obey him in good faith till he released me from the engagement. Otherwise, he should leave me on board.

"You will leave her at any rate if you are wise," said Mary Hervey, who had come out of the inner cabin. "Dead men tell no tales, Mark, nor dead women neither!"

"So I think, Mary," said Matson. "But if Lady Alice promises, it is the same as if she were dead."

"I consented, on condition that I never was to be asked any thing contrary to my conscience. 'Your word is as good as your oath,' he said. 'Still, swear it by the love of God and the cross of Christ,' and he took from his desk a crucifix for me to kiss. He went out and made all the arrangements to victual the boat and get a water cask aboard of her; then he came back for me. Mary Hervey was still in the outer cabin, still in the dress of a Sister of Mercy. She would have accompanied us, but Matson ordered her to go into the inner cabin, and wait till he came for her. 'Lady Alice can not get into the boat without assistance, with this sea,' he said, 'and if I leave you, to help her, all will be discovered. Go, I tell you, girl,' he added, in a voice of thunder, as she hesitated, 'go, or I will make you, and leave you to boot.'

"She obeyed in a fright, and he immediately locked her in. She flew at the door, with a scream. She divined his intention in a moment. I did not. 'The fool!' he said to me, 'she would spoil all. A little fright will do her good.'

"It was not till we pushed away from the vessel's side that I became aware of his intention to leave her, and saw that he must have intended something of the sort from the very first. 'It is too late,' he sternly replied, to my trembling remonstrances and threats; and, indeed, it was not many minutes before it became so. It would have cost any one's life to go on board, and all our lives to have got the boat alongside again. She had gone into the trap with her eyes open. We heard her screams. At last, the waves swept over the hulk and those shrieks were hushed.

"We got out of provisions, very, very soon, as it seemed. They accused Matson of having secreted biscuit. He shot one man for mutiny, which cowed the rest. This was the mate, and the only one left of the crew that was aware of the substitution that had been made. They made a use of the body too horrible to think of. Such were the scenes of which I was witness."

Alice hid her face in her friend's bosom. "Embrace me, caress me," she murmured; "make me feel that there is love and gentleness on

earth." Again after a while, she pursued her narrative.

"Every night, Matson gave me a biscuit steeped in water, which prolonged my life and sufferings. I would gladly have died, did not expect to live, and often prayed that, if it pleased God, He would take me to himself. Yet, despite the physical tortures of thirst and hunger, I was not without a certain enjoyment, especially after I became so weak that the scenes about me did not attract my attention or rack my sympathy. Toward the last, when our numbers were very much reduced, it rained nearly all the time, which relieved us from our keenest suffering. One night it came down in torrents, drenching every one but me, who lay in Matson's oiled cloak, and half filling our water-cask. But for this we must all have perished. The biscuit entirely failed, and the last two days I had no sustenance but water. The weather was now fine again, and Matson laid me in the shadow of the sail. Can you understand that, in spite of his wickedness, and the injuries he had inflicted on me, I came to feel a sort of attachment to this man, in consequence of his incessant and even delicate cares for me at this time? But he laid me, I say, in the shadow of the sail, and I could see, as my head rested on a pillow of elastic, the sharks pursuing our track, and the stormy petrel playing around us with its indefatigable wings, as I had often read. Sometimes, a flotilla of the Nautilus swept past us; sometimes, a shoal of leaping porpoises. After a gentle evening shower that did not touch us, a rainbow—of which the radiant limbs were continued from the horizon over the surface of the sea, till they nearly met the eye and completed almost a circle of vivid iridescence, exhibited itself to enchant me. I was now free from pain, and my mind in a state of exaltation, almost of ecstasy.

"You know how we were taken up. Little as I had suffered in comparison with the other survivors, I was so mere a skeleton, and my complexion, which had seemed sun and weather-proof, was so burned and blackened, that it is not strange no one could tell if I were man or woman. The ship's captain gave up his stateroom to Matson and myself. We passed for brothers; I kept my berth till we reached Bordeaux. The journey that followed was a severe trial. I was fearfully ill. There was a bed in the carriage, which I never quitted: Matson acted as my servant; I was just aware when we entered Paris; after that, I remember nothing till I found myself lying in a bed in a darkened chamber, and females tending me.

"My first impression was, that I was with my friends. I had not forgotten the past, but I was persuaded by a circumstance extremely trivial, and yet which I can never recall without tears at the recollection, and at my subsequent disappointment. Raising my hands, I observed the kind of lace with which the wristbands of my night-dress were trimmed, and the very peculiar method in which the latter were worked—little things that I had taken a girlish pleasure in being particular about. At last, I became surprised that my mother did not appear. I mustered strength to ask some feeble questions, and in reply received a note from Matson! It informed me that I was mistress in the villa where I was, and desired me to act as such, but to ask

no questions, nor answer any, and generally to act in 'good faith.' A physician attended me daily for some time. When I was well enough to sit up and be dressed, I found a complete and elegant female wardrobe, the counterpart of that I had left at St. Walerie. The apartments devoted to my use were fitted up with all the luxury that wealth and taste could command at Paris. I found musical instruments, materials to draw, paint or embroider, books; in short, every thing I could desire. The table—and my appetite now revived with great keenness—was exquisitely supplied; and there was no restraint upon my liberty except what arose from my promise. Under these circumstances, I recovered rapidly. One day, when I entered the saloon just before I expected dinner to be served—I had always an idea that I should some day encounter a host at that hour—I found Lord Wessex and Lady Fitzjames."

"I expected that," said Grace Clifford.

"I was extremely relieved to see the latter, as you may suppose. She ran to embrace me, expressing the greatest pleasure to see me alive and well after all my sufferings. Lord Wessex begged to kiss my hand. I said I trusted their coming was to restore me to my friends, and Lady Fitzjames said she hoped so too; but, as soon as we were alone after dinner, I got from her an account from which I better comprehended my situation.

"It was to her brother, of course, that I was indebted for the outrage I had endured, and can you fancy, Grace, that he proposed, without doing any thing that could give me a pretext for dispensing with my oath, to take up his residence at the villa, and become my daily companion? My absolute refusal brought Matson on the stage once more. What could I do against them all; for Augusta, though she hated them both, was not to be depended on in the least? To escape, on any compact that my conscience allowed, was my duty, as you will admit. Before, I had had to fear, at worst, an outrage from which death would have purified me by dissolving the body that had suffered it, but now the innocence of my mind was threatened. Dreadfully in their power as I was, I thought I had reason to rejoice when I obtained of Matson, by new and yet more solemn pledges, that amelioration of my lot which I now enjoy. For, whatever it may appear to the thoughtlessness of girlhood, Grace, I can assure you that this of mine is a forlorn existence. How willingly would I exchange again my present liberty for the sweet restraints of my sex's decorum, that used to whisper hourly in my ear the preciousness not only of my innocence but of my unblemished reputation! But I am pledged to this, or whatever else may be necessary to preserve the secret of my existence, or render a discovery useless. And you must give me your solemn word to confine that which you have made to your own breast, or, to-morrow, I must leave Rome, and you will probably never hear of me again."

"Alice! you are not bound by such an oath."

"I shall keep it," said Alice, with a resolute expression. "I have suffered so far by the wickedness, and for the faults, of others. I will not, in my impatience to be delivered from my captivity, make myself an offender. My appeal is to Heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

THIS ended by Grace giving a conditional promise, such as her friend required. Alice was then eager for all sorts of information about her family. Every moment she softened more into the woman as she listened, while, with every familiar name, the crowd of former associations rushed back upon her soul. She also perceived why Grace alone had been able to see through her disguise, which was in so great a degree a moral one. Louise, in her happiness, had in some measure forgotten her repentance; Augustus, true to his character, desponded for Frederick as once for himself; St. Liz had too much common sense to believe any thing so extraordinary as a *revenante*; their dear Clarie, who knew Alice better than any one, by the very anecdotes which she loved to relate of her gentle "mistress," accustomed herself and others to think of her as lost; Stratherne was preoccupied by his love for Grace; but Grace, (not indifferent to him, as her blush proved), was nobly resolved to live for her more than widowed brother. This unselfish purpose rendered so clear that inward eye, without which the outward sense is given in vain.

"And Frederick?"

"Sees me too clearly in the mirror of his unceasing reveries, to recognize my real form. Were I to appear to him as I was, the shock might be even too great for his reason, or too sudden for his heart. The vague association with his Alice which Fitzalan offers, blends much more readily with the eidolon of his morbid fancy. His delusion is salutary and remedial. The phantom-Alice grows already faint: when it has ceased to haunt him, he will recognize me."

"And you are going almost to live with him?" said Grace, reproachfully.

"Were I to give up my rooms," said Alice, "I should excite a suspicion that would be fatal to the preservation of my secret. As Fred himself would say, a little audacity now is my only chance."

"But how can you reconcile it to your conscience, Alice, to remain in a position—I won't say so dangerous, but so equivocal?"

"My dear Grace, there is nothing you can say on that subject which my own sad meditations have not a thousand times anticipated. What troubles me most is, that for man or woman to wear the garb appropriated by custom to the other sex seems expressly forbidden by Scripture. It is a dreadful thing to me to violate such a law. I ask myself, day by day, if the promise by which I engaged to do it was not void in itself?"

"I think it strange only that you can doubt," said Grace.

"Yes, my sweet sister, but I am so inclined to break that promise? This disguise is so odious to me! I feel its degradation—its inconvenience—its isolation—so painfully. I am too conscious of abhorring it—of longing to throw it off forever—to fear that my wearing it can be imputed to me as a voluntary sin. And an oath! The king of Israel once bound himself and his people by one most rashly. His son violated it in pure ignorance, and God visited the transgression on the whole army of Saul. Why should

I 'say before the Angel'—the witness of my actions—that it was an error—that 'God should destroy the work of my hands?' How can I venture, by the least infringement of so awful a sanction as that which I did not scruple to invoke, to forfeit the smiles that make the light and joy of the universe!" said Alice, passionately, her tears once more breaking forth. "No, no, no;—the hour of trial which is at length arrived, finds me trembling, but resolved; and my resolution is, to observe my oath with religious fidelity, as if it were a thing required of me by Him only to whom it has made me accountable:—deliverance from my enemies is of infinitely less importance than the acquittal of my soul; and that shall come too, in good time, at the hands of my guardian angel."

When Alice was about to quit her friend, Fitzalan's luckless over-shoes were found at the door where Lord Stratherne had deposited them. Next it was discovered that the door of the passage was locked from without. "I must get out by the window," said Fitzalan. "I was just thinking how easily a lover might." Grace seemed very much alarmed lest her fair fame should suffer were a young man to be seen escaping in that manner from her room.—"If you are violently suspected," said Fitzalan, "you have always the resource of telling who I am." Nevertheless, for greater security, he agreed to postpone his departure till early in the morning.

A window of Grace Clifford's dressing-room that overlooked a garden terrace was open. Two figures—one in a long white dress, the other more indistinctly visible by the keen starlight—were standing in the balcony. There was a mutual embrace, and Fitzalan, twisting one end of his cloak round one of the bars of the balcony, gave the extremity into Grace's hand; then, suffering the other to hang down, sprang lightly over the rail, and reached the garden in a moment.

"Ben fatto! Mille grazie, amatissima mia!"

"Felice notte! caro mio!"

"Felicissima notte! and may we soon pass another as sweet."

The garden wall within was a mere parapet, but the height from the street was considerable. Fitzalan dropped his cloak on the pavement to break the fall, and let himself down by the hands as far as possible. Two powerful hands caught him as he let go; his own cloak was thrown over his head and whole figure, and he was borne away in the arms of a person unknown, but whose firm tread under his burden announced no ordinary vigor. By the motion, they were evidently descending the Via Gregoriana.

"Who are you? • What do you want of me? Answer, or I scream for help."

"You will do nothing to risk the reputation of the lady you have just quitted, I am sure."

"Stratherne," murmured Alice. "Set me down," she continued, gently. "This cloak stifles me. I will do any thing you wish. There is no need of violence."

Lord Stratherne set her down, and she disengaged herself from the cloak. They were at the corner of the Gregoriana and Capo le Case, and the earl, pointing down the latter, led the way. The descent is rapid, and they soon arrived at the college of the Propaganda, where

the Due Macelli leads to the Piazza di Spagna. Lord Stratherne turned into the Due Macelli, and led on with rapid strides.

"I can not conveniently walk quite so fast as you," said Fitzalan, quite breathless, as they reached the square. The young earl relaxed his pace. "Can't you say here what you want?"

"I want you to come with me to my rooms in the Europa."

"Willingly."

They arrived at the hotel, roused the porter, were admitted. Lord Stratherne's rooms were *au premier*, spacious, adapted to reception, which he could not avoid.

"All paid for with my own rents," thought Alice, dropping into an easy chair with great nonchalance.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Fitzalan," said her brother, after a turn or two up and down the room, "for my rudeness just now. I really meant to save you from a fall, and then—a sense of my physical superiority, which I dare say will seem to you a very petty thing, prompted me to carry you."

"I was not offended; and I thank you very much for saving me a sprained ankle or wrist, or something of that sort," said Fitzalan.

"I think you are an orphan, Mr. Fitzalan?"

"I have lost both my parents," said Alice.

"And all your near relatives, I understood? Forgive me for recalling any thing so painful."

"I am alone in the world."

"It would be very selfish," said Lord Stratherne, "to bear you ill-will on account of the brilliant and interesting qualities which win you at once the love and confidence of strangers."

The eyes of Alice glistened.

"I can easily fancy," continued Lord Stratherne, "that your interview with Miss Clifford had a cause that justified it in her eyes. You had related to her some case of distress, I will suppose, which she immediately offered you the means of relieving. Her charity, I know, is unbounded."

"You have exactly divined the truth," said Fitzalan. "I went to Miss Clifford's room to give her the details of a case of distress."

"In spite of any thing I saw or heard to the contrary, your interview may have been blameless to the last, though not discreet."

"I assure you," replied Alice, a slight, involuntary smile playing on her sweet lip, though she struggled to be serious, "I assure you that it was blameless. And it was not our own fault, altogether, I apprehend, that I spent a considerable part of the night in her apartment," added she, with a demure and side-long glance.

Lord Stratherne looked a little confused.

"If, our lordship means to read me a lecture," continued Fitzalan, with smiling effrontery, "you may spare yourself the trouble. I wouldn't do any of the naughty things of which you seem to suspect me, for the whole world."

Day was beginning to break. The young earl's countenance, in the pale morning light, wore a very incredulous expression. There seemed to him something very cynical and Mephistophiles-like in the coolness and audacious smiles of this dazzling boy. There was also a gleam in Fitzalan's eyes which was not of boy-

hood, and in all that radiant visage a something more than was natural to his sex and years, but whether it was demoniac or divine, Lord Stratherne could not determine. Clifford, who was so very clever, thought the latter; and Clifford's sister, who was certainly most serious and pure, appeared to think so too.

"I have no intention of constituting myself the guardian of your morals, Mr. Fitzalan," he said, at length. "Neither is it precisely the honor and happiness of Miss Clifford that I am thinking of at present, though both are dearer to me than I can well express. It is of your worldly position that I would speak. You are her brother's equal friend, which very few could pretend to be. Were you the younger son of a ruined peer, or the heir of a man who had made his million at the Stock Exchange, her family would not object to her choice. But your being a genius does not save you from being an adventurer, if you aspire to the love and the hand of a girl in her position.

"I have an estate," continued Lord Stratherne, "the possession of which is painful to me on many accounts, and would be equally to any other member of my family. I have already consulted my father on a plan to rid ourselves of it, although it has been in our family upward of three hundred years. I am certain that any of my brothers, all of whom are old enough to understand this feeling, would entirely share it. That fatal inheritance," said Lord Stratherne, with agitation, "has caused the death—under circumstances to wring all our hearts—of a member of our family, who was justly the dearest and most cherished of all. We feel as if a curse rested on it like the price of a murder, and I am pitied, I assure you, for being the one to inherit it. Every *scudo* that passes through my hands here in Rome, where first I have begun to touch its rental, seems to me stained with a sister's blood, perhaps with her dishonor. You, Mr. Fitzalan, by your singular talents, your no less singular beauty, your voice, incessantly recall her," said Lord Stratherne, stopping before his sister, and regarding her with mournful earnestness. "Let me render to you her fortune. You seem designated by Heaven to possess it."

Alice started to her feet, and walked to the window, where she remained some time in meditation, and looking out upon the silent and deserted square. Then, she returned to her brother, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"My dear Stratherne," she said, "we will talk this over another time, more calmly. You will come and see me at my rooms. In regard to Miss Clifford, if you were witness of our parting, as you intimate, you should have known by its cheerfulness that we were conscious of no shameful fault. If we embraced—why, my dear Stratherne, you are very innocent, I perceive.—Such a thing proves only that my behavior in a situation in which you yourself had placed us, engaged her esteem. Your charming Grace looks upon me as she would upon a friend of her own sex. Love—if there could be a question of it in this case—does not so soon forget its timidity. I must go home now," added Fitzalan, "and you too must make up for your vigil, which was quite superfluous."

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

THE moral of such a tale as this will hardly be comprehended by those who have the habit of going to fiction for representations of real life. The embodiment of the genuine idea which, in the contemplation of faith, replaces the destiny that pursued the House of Atreus, will quite escape their notice: the departure from reality to gain the permanence and beauty of the ideal will probably offend them; and how shall they be interested in the resolution of the problem whether strict virtue and blameless innocence in both sexes, may be invested with the deep charm of passion and suffering, that has generally been gained only in the more facile portraiture of frailty and crime?

Nevertheless there may be something rather interesting in a picture of Clifford and Fitzalan, on one of the keen, sparkling mornings of a Roman January, sallying forth, at six, for a walk on the Pincian—their animated and so singularly contrasted forms skirting the brow of the lofty terrace, while the whitened earth crackles under their frank and rapid steps? Occasionally, as the promenade at this hour is quite a solitude, they break into a run, which, after a couple of minutes, ends by Fitzalan's giving in, with a musical laugh that rings on the frosty air.

They return by the Scalinata, and on their way invariably stop at the Convent Church of Santa Trinità dei Monti, to hear an early mass. Here also Fitzalan always stops before the chapel adorned with exquisite pictures of the German Catholic school, and always, before leaving the church, both linger for a few minutes in the last soft-lighted chapel, where hangs Daniel Volterra's wondrous Descent from the Cross. Then they descend, with quieter steps, to breakfast together at the Greco; but, after the first few mornings, when the agreeable novelty has worn off, their matin meal is oftener taken in Clifford's rooms.

Fitzalan's work commenced at eight: this separated them till noon. Then they lunched at Nazzarri's; then, lounged an hour or two in a gallery. In the afternoon, the Gregorian family were always driving or riding out to see something or other, and Fitzalan gave up his work to accompany them. On these occasions the rôle of the beautiful artist, who had none of the affectations and egotism of the Corinne, was to ask Clifford questions; and by the fountain of Egeria, or under the Basilica of Constantine, in the Thermæ of Caracalla or Titus, or amid the yet uncrumbled memorials of a more recent and holier antiquity, Frederick, excited by his friend's sympathy and eager intelligence, poured forth his inexhaustible and eloquent learning, unconsciously drawing all attention to himself, while Augustus and Louise, Clarinelle and St. Liz, listened with various emotions, but all marking with delight how the intellect and heart of their brother and friend daily recovered their freshness amid the dust and *débris* of the world's vanished youth.

Fitzalan and Clifford always dined together; it was not generally at the Europa, but in the Via Gregoriana, or at Clifford's own apartments, or, if at the hotel, then at Lord Stratherne's rooms. Fitzalan would not give up the Academy. He was very careful, indeed, that a considerable portion of the waking hours of every day should separate his friend and himself. If a model did not seclude him in the morning, then the Academy or the Sketch-club did in the evening. At other times, he remained at home, ever busy with his pencil, while Clifford read to him—generally some German romance. This sweetest portion of the time which they spent in each other's society was, however, very brief. The habits of Fitzalan were of an extreme regularity. To rise so early, it was needful to retire betimes; and neither the conversation of his friend, nor the thrilling interest of the exciting narrative, could ever induce him to prolong the sitting beyond the hour of ten. But Frederick had the habit, formed in early life, of reciting every night the Compline of the Roman Church, and now, adding, by her suggestion, the sacred melodies in which she delighted, Alice and he chanted it together before they separated, kneeling at the little altar in her room. Then they shook hands, Clifford passed through her dressing-room into his own, and, in a minute, the gliding bolt that secured the reserved artist's privacy, was sent home.

But the success of the thousand wise and graceful arts, by which Alice maintained the salutary delusion of her lover, never lowered him in the least in her eyes. She comprehended perfectly his state, looked upon him as morally her patient; reverencing the sacred infirmities of a mind so brilliant. She felt, too, that it was almost awful to behold a man loving thus like a chaste woman—like her very self—with the profoundest tenderness, attaching itself to the person of its object, yet without desire. Looking at him, and meeting his glance of satisfied affection, as, in the evening, in his cheerful saloon, he sate on a cushion at her feet, leaning against the sofa, while the light of the shaded lamp by which she was drawing fell on his nobly-molded head and features of sculptured regularity, she thought that an intimacy at once so sweet and so tranquil, so familiar and yet so mysterious, with the woman that he loved, might be deemed no inadequate compensation for all his strange sufferings.

Weeks glided on, almost unnoticed. The carnival approached, and Rome was filling with strangers. Among the arrivals, was that of Lord and Lady Wessex from the East, having touched at Naples, and left their yacht at Civita Vecchia. There was no intercourse between the Wessexes and the family in the Via Gregoriana.

Fitzalan had finished his picture—the Departure from the Sepulcher—and placed it in the Exposition; partly to avoid visitors at his rooms, for it was much talked of. Clifford wanted it, but yielded reluctantly to Lord Stratherne, who wished to buy it for his mother.

Lord Wessex saw it at the Exposition, and, not knowing that it was sold, obtained the painter's address from the *custode*, and, the next day, called on Fitzalan, with the marchioness.

"He seems to be a Roman Catholic," said Lady Wessex, seating herself on the sofa, and observing the little altar by the bedside.

"Apparently," replied her lord, with a glance of curiosity round the apartment.

"How many musical instruments!" continued Lady Wessex. "A harp too! Is he married, I wonder?" The marchioness rose with this observation, and approached the bed.

"Do you see that, Wessex? There is a crucifix on it, as we saw in the rooms of the Convent Tor di Specchi yesterday."

Lord Wessex made no reply, and his wife sighed. She turned away to look next at the Virgin and Child over the little altar. Her lord fell to examining a volume that lay on the table—a Pilgrim's Progress interleaved with drawing-paper, and filled with illustrations in pencil. Some of these were infinitely grotesque; others of a perfect beauty. In the second part one divine face was perpetually occurring. It was that of Mercy. Here she fainted at the wicket gate: here dreamed at the interpreter's house: here knelt, sorrowful, but not despairing, in the valley of the Shadow of Death. While he mused over it, Lady Wessex suddenly exclaimed—

"He can't be a Roman Catholic, for this is an English prayer-book!" Just then Mr. Fitzalan's boy came down, to say that his master was ready to receive them.

This was, undoubtedly, a strange meeting. Lord Wessex had never seen Alice except in the dress of her own sex, nor was he aware under what name, or in what part of the world, his victim was concealed. The beautiful artist, in his studio robe and cap, was at his easel, pallet and brushes in hand, and bowed with formal politeness as the visitors entered. Lord Stratherne was with him, and, knowing Lady Wessex very well, did the honors, saying, apologetically, that Mr. Fitzalan never laid aside his work at that hour for any one. It was not till Lord Wessex spoke of the picture at the Exposition, and expressed their wish to become its purchasers, if it were not too late, that Fitzalan, finding that Lord Stratherne did not reply to this, answered, looking round at the marquis, that the picture in question was sold.

Lord Wessex recoiled a step, and turned deadly pale. The marchioness looked extremely astonished; but Lord Stratherne, who thought he understood the cause of the marquis's emotion, occupied himself with the new composition on which Fitzalan was engaged. There was an awkward silence, till the marchioness, curious and a little excited, began to talk to the young painter. Fitzalan replied with gentleness and brevity, his soft, dark eye resting upon her earnestly. She seemed fascinated, yet confused. Her lord, standing a little apart, and affecting to look at the unfinished pictures and studies that were about, scanned furtively the face and figure of the artist. The bells rang for *mezzo-giorno*. Fitzalan surrendered his *palette* to his boy; the visitors took leave, Lord Stratherne, at the young artist's cool request, conducting them down. On the *studio* stair they encountered Clifford, who retreated into the dressing-room. Lady

Wessex, his ancient ally and friend—a Glentworth friend—blushed deeply to meet him, but extended both her hands with lively pleasure.

"Really!" she exclaimed, as he answered, categorically, a number of questions which she poured forth, "then I suppose you are *chez vous* at this moment?"

"No, this is my friend Fitzalan's territory. Mine only commences with the next room."

"Ah, your friend Fitzalan is a singular, but most interesting personage," whispered Lady Wessex. "When you call, as of course you will ('tis at the Angleterre), bring him with you. Till then," she added, pressing his hand almost with tenderness, "Adieu."

As Lord Wessex, following his wife down the steep and narrow little stair, passed Clifford, the latter, while he returned the bow of the marquis with a frigid tranquillity, caught, scarcely with surprise, his anxious and quailing glance.

CHAPTER II.

To date from the visit of Lord and Lady Wessex, the cheerfulness of Fitzalan gave place to depression. He made many attempts at this time to obtain another private interview with Miss Clifford, in which he was foiled by the well-meant vigilance of Lord Stratherne. Fitzalan had contrived to evade the offers of fortune which the latter continued to press upon him, and to evade them in such a way as to preclude their being renewed. Clifford became aware of the grave alteration in his friend's spirits, and attributed it to a sort of reaction, to which minds of creative energy are extremely liable. It seemed to him, though, that Fitzalan rather avoided him; and he would have accused the young artist of inconstancy, had not his look of suffering when they met, and indescribable softness of manner in parting with him, even for a few hours, assured him of the contrary. When this state of things had endured about a week, occurred some singular incidents.

The day before the first of the Carnival, he was taking a solitary ride beyond the Porta Maggiore, Fitzalan having pleaded an engagement with the Lehmanns, as Clifford understood it. Two miles out in the Campagna he encountered Lord Wessex, riding with a lady, certainly not the marchioness. Her figure was of perfect symmetry, and she sat her horse with singular grace and courage. They were riding with rapidity, followed by a groom; and, as they dashed by, the lady averted her face, and held down her vail. The skirt of her dark blue riding-habit fluttering in the wind, swept over Clifford's boot, giving him a momentary thrill to which he had been long a stranger.

Returning home, he took on his way a small cross street, running between the Propaganda and the Corso. It was in this street, which bore the name of Della Vite, that the Lehmanns resided. He was a little surprised, as he turned into it, to observe the same mounted groom who had been following Lord Wessex and his companion, leading away the lady's horse from Lehmann's door. Lehmann lived in the third story; naturally, there were other apartments in the house, and in this point of view the coincidence was not such as

to attract attention; but it seemed to him singular that the Marquis of Wessex should be riding with a lady, lodging in a third-rate house in one of the obscurest streets of the foreign quarter.

It was Friday, of course, since it was the day before the Carnival, and the two friends ate their meager dinner in Clifford's rooms. As soon as it was cleared away, Clifford had the dried fruit and wine carried into the saloon. Fitzalan, pale and evidently fatigued, and whom the unstimulating meal, of which he had sparingly partaken, had not renovated, sank languidly into an easy chair, and was silent. Clifford ordered tea immediately, as what would best restore his friend's spirits.

"My best friend," said Fitzalan, with swimming eyes, "the matter with me is, that we must part."

This was a great shock; however, it was in some degree relieved by the hope held out that this separation was not to be final. Fitzalan was going to Naples only, and it appeared that Clifford had misapprehended his friend's language in one respect. Fitzalan frankly confessed that he had not lost all his immediate relatives by death, as Clifford supposed. Having warned him that he considered himself justified in using language that was true only in the point of view in which he had a right to be regarded, he thought his friend would not be surprised or puzzled to learn that he had a sister at present in Rome, and was about to accompany her to Naples. Fitzalan said this with the air of one repeating a lesson, and seemed to expect from Clifford some demonstration of suspicion or astonishment. It was, indeed, wonderful that such a statement, so introduced, could pass. It was plain that Fitzalan considered himself in no wise responsible for its effect, and was disappointed even when it was readily believed.

"Where is she staying, may I ask?" said Clifford.

"With the Lehmanns," said Fitzalan, quietly.

"Hem! Is your sister, Fitzalan, acquainted with the Marquis of Wessex?"

"She is, indeed, too well acquainted with him!" said Fitzalan, sinking back and turning pale.

"Ah!" said Frederick, changing color in turn. He mused for some time—then asked, with some embarrassment: "May Lady Beauchamp and Grace call on your sister, Alfred?"

Fitzalan's instant assent appeared to remove a painful impression.

"Does your sister resemble you?" he said.

"She is my very self," said Fitzalan, with emotion. But for the difference of dress," he added, more quietly, and in a low tone, "you could not tell us apart."

"Really! I have seen several instances of such a resemblance, but never one where the common type was so beautiful."

"Have you ever known an instance before, where the sex was different?" asked Fitzalan, with a shade of sad sarcasm in his affectionate accent.

It was Thursday of the Carnival. All the world is aware that the wild merriment of the season is then at its height. During the three days which have preceded, the insanity has gradually worked itself up to the highest, and

the forced cessation of the morrow, on account of the fast, augments still more the mad abandon of the present. In this instance, the interruption was to endure for two days, for Saturday was the Vigil of the Purification.

Besides the double file of carriages in the Corso, and the avenues that lead to it, the Baboino, Piazza di Spagna, and even the Due Macelli were occupied by long lines, of which the rear-guard must have entertained faint hopes of ever entering the Corso itself. Their case was the more hopeless, inasmuch as many of the fantastic equipages, filled with maskers, which had already gained the coveted position, contrived, by means, known to the initiated, to evade the regulation, and, dextrously changing from one file to another, remained nearly all the afternoon on the course.

Meanwhile, the occupants of the carriages unfairly excluded from their turn, endeavored to indemnify themselves by throwing flowers, *bonbons* and *confetti* at each other, and at the maskers, and others who occasionally passed. Sometimes, parties of masks issued, in considerable force, from the Corso, where they encountered perpetually the same characters, and made the tour of the Baboino, to discover new faces or costumes, and have the opportunity of exchanging flowers with their owners. A carriage, containing pretty or prettily-dressed girls, would arrest such a party for many minutes, while a shower of these innoxious missiles fell on both sides, terminating in a brisk mutual pelting with the lime *confetti*, as a saucy farewell.

One low-hung, rather showy carriage, attracted a great deal of this sort of attention. It was occupied by two young females, in a brilliant peasant costume, but who evidently belonged to the higher classes of society. One, indeed, was universally recognized as the English beauty of the season, the Hon. Miss Clifford; her companion, who attracted at least equal attention, and more curiosity, was quite unknown. The stiff bodice and formal kerchief, with the coquettish *tournure*, did not betray too much of an elegant figure; yet, though her cheek was a shade more peasant-like in tint than that of her companion, few who had ever seen her could have failed to recognize the peerless face of Alice Stuart, had it not been for the satin-like *bandeaux*, and profuse braids of dark-brown hair, which, truth to say, slightly contradicted a complexion that, in spite of some artificial tones, was as delicate as glowing.

On the front seat of the carriage was a panier filled with choice flowers; another, at their feet, contained *bonbons*, and a sack of false *confetti* reposed in one corner; so that they were prepared to take a part in the merriment of the Carnival. Yet they seemed little annoyed at the frequent arrests which threatened to prevent their ever entering the Corso, and but moderately delighted at the courtesies they received from every passing promenader. They flung flowers and *confetti*, though, with spirit; and particularly when a number of artists in gay, uniform costumes surrounded the carriage, and for a few minutes, perfectly overwhelmed them with nosegays and sugar-plums.

"Are not those friends of yours? They don't recognize you."

"Does it matter? After the pains I have

taken to bring about this interview, let us not waste it."

"Pardon me. You were saying that the artist, Fitzalan, must be disposed of."

"That is clear. He is known to too many, of all ranks, to be obscure any where. When he has gone with his 'sister' to Naples, and has sailed thence to America, I may assume the garb of my sex; but in another country, where it is unlikely that any of you will ever follow me."

"I must speak to Fred, then. We must all interfere to prevent this."

"What can you tell them, Grace?—That the artist, Fitzalan, and their lost Alice are one. Whatever else you know, has been imparted in a confidence which you are pledged not to violate. And the single fact which alone you have a right to divulge, you have promised not to betray without giving me twenty-four hours' notice. Where do you think I shall be in twenty-four hours, dear Grace? You know that I am bound not merely to a certain line of external conduct in regard to the secret of my existence, but to use all my faculties and energy, in good faith, to prevent discovery, or render it useless. You will but agitate the hearts of my friends, prolong to an indefinite period that anxiety on my account, from which they are, happily, at present, free, and cut me off from that life of peace and decorum which is open to me now, compelling me to resort, in place of it, to new disguises, and an almost disreputable vagabondage."

Grace was silent.

"It will be very easy for me to withdraw myself from you, and from all chance of successful pursuit," continued Alice; "far easier than you at all think. And the time is come," she added, as the carriage at last entered the Corso, and she took the hand of her terrified companion in both hers.

"You must give me the solemn and irrevocable promise I require, dearest Grace, or I spring from the carriage among the crowd that is hemming us in, and that is the last you will ever see or hear of Alice Stuart."

"Oh, don't make me promise!" said Grace, imploringly. "Don't take away entirely a discretion that may yet secure your safety!"

Alice sprang lightly over the side of the carriage, and was lost, in an instant, in the throng.

"I promise—Al—my sister, my friend! I promise!" shrieked Grace, springing to her feet, and looking wildly in the direction where her companion had disappeared. The masks and *marchands de fleurs*, thronged by, yelled their discordant cries; some laughed at her, others threw flowers; a mocking imp, in a black skin-tight dress, with red ears, and a red tail, got upon the iron step of the carriage, and bowed to her with vehement gesticulations; a furious shower of *confetti* from a balcony covered her with lime; but Grace heeded it not. Pale and despairing, she leaned against the front of the carriage, which moved slowly through the dense and parti-colored throng.

"I promise!" she cried aloud, at intervals, careless who might notice her, and trusting that Alice might be yet within hearing.

A domino, in a frightful mask, now got upon

the other carriage-step, and she began to be alarmed at being thus—a girl, alone, in this wild scene, where the strangers on the carriage-box (for they were not her brother's servants) seemed no protection.

"What is it you say? You shouldn't talk English, if you want be understood," said a disguised voice, in Italian, from beneath the frightful mask. But she was really terrified when the domino that wore it proceeded deliberately to step over the side, into the carriage. She appealed to the footman, who, in the uproar, did not hear her.

"This is carrying matters too far," she said, turning to the mask, with agitation, yet indignant. "Have the goodness to leave the carriage now, you have frightened me enough."

"Have I?" said the sweetest voice in the world, and Alice threw off the mask and domino.

Grace embraced her in her joy. The mob, who had been looking on with some interest, applauded with laughter and cheers what they considered a highly successful hit in the humors of the carnival. Alice smiled with fascination as she accepted a bouquet from a gentleman in an elegant fancy costume of white silk and roses.

They are obliged to draw up at the Piazza Colonna, to allow the state equipages of the Senator and Governor of Rome to pass in procession.

"Ecco fiori! ecco fiori! confetti!" shouted the flower-merchants, crying their slight wares incessantly amid the din.

At last, their carriage got out of the Corso, at the Piazza di Venezia, and they drove by Alice's request, to the Church of the Gesù. Here, amid the carnival, the sacrament was exposed in the form of the 'Quarant' Ore': and, on the pavement of the darkened nave, before an altar illumined with hundreds of wax-lights, a numerous congregation knelt in profoundest silence. Grace Clifford gazed with awe on a scene so impressive in itself, and so singularly contrasting with the excitement, the wild tumult, and frenzied gayety of that they had just quitted. Alice sunk on her knees, at her friend's side. She was accustomed to pay such marks of the deepest reverence at the sign of His effective presence, Who "dwelt in the bush;" but now, in that dark and silent church—dark, yet with a center of intense light that only heightened the shadows of the nave and deep gloom of the chapels—her soul wandered back to the Chapel of Lennox House and its beautiful sanctities; to the mother and the brethren who had knelt with her at its holy altar—to the night when, in the glow of girlish enthusiasm, blending with her deep religion and her chaste love, she had explained, in the presence of its angel watch, to one dearer than all, why she could not give him her maiden troth. She bowed her head upon the step of a confessional, and wept convulsively.

This passed away. Grace, who observed her with scarcely less agitation, saw her lift to the streaming light a placid countenance. And Alice clasped her hands, as she looked toward the illumined sanctuary, and said—

"BUT THOU CONTINUEST HOLY, O THOU WORSHIP OF ISRAEL!"

CHAPTER III.

MISS FITZALAN never appeared again after she had succeeded in going in a carriage, with Grace Clifford, on the carnival. Her card (P. P. C.) was left at the Via Gregoriana when the ladies were out: an innocent ruse, which perfectly succeeded. This was on Saturday. Her brother called in the evening, to explain—to the dismay of Grace and pain of Frederick and the rest, that, anticipating the difficulty of getting away, and the thronging of the inns after the carnival, he had arranged to leave Rome on Monday morning. By this means, availing themselves of the railroad from Capua, they should reach Naples on Tuesday night, and so pass Ash-Wednesday in that city. This was a great disappointment, for the young artist and his sister were to have been at Lady Beauchamp's musical soirée on Sunday evening, but now must be excused, on the score of preparations for their journey.

Clifford and his friend met for the last time, as it proved, at the early communion in the English chapel, on Sunday morning. It was a thing that neither ever missed. They sate together, knelt side by side at the altar-rails. At the end of the service Fitzalan went to the vestry-room, to return some books to the chapel library, and take leave of the chaplain. The cold manner which belies the kindness of this gentleman's heart, softened toward one who inspired universal interest.

"Oh!" he said, "you are going, are you? Well! I am sorry to lose you, you know. We shall miss you Sunday morning, and on the Pincian, too. Good-by."

The loud, clear tone in which this was said, did not indicate any great feeling, yet Fitzalan seemed moved, and Mr. —, who really had much less command of his muscles than he appeared, repeated his last words with a tremulous inflection.

That Sunday was also the Feast of the Purification, and Lord and Lady Beauchamp were, of course, going to St. Peter's, to witness the benediction of the candles and the solemnity of the procession, in which the former, as a great Roman Catholic noble, was to take part. The latter was to sit in the tribune of the Embassadors' ladies, a privilege which her mere rank could not have procured, but which the courtesy and *esprit de corps* of the diplomatic body extended to one who had been their ornament. Grace was going under the chaperonage of Mrs. St. Liz, and at a very early hour, in order to secure a place. In fine, they were all going except Lord Stratherne, who would not have missed the English service on a great festival, to see, carried in procession, as many lighted candles as could stand in all the Basilicas of Rome.

Clifford was hesitating whether to go or not. If Fitzalan had been going, or if he had been going to the English chapel, that would have decided him. But the young artist, having attended, as has been said, the early, or nine o'clock communion, was to breakfast at Lehmann's, and would not go to church unless his "sister" did. In saying this the tears stood in his eyes.

Clifford, then, parted with his young friend at the Portone of their own palace; and after an-

other moment's indecision, reflecting that he had never witnessed the ceremony of Candlemas Day at Rome, and might never have another opportunity, resolved to go. There was no time for breakfast—barely could he hope to reach the Basilica in season for the entrance of the Pope—but he was too accustomed to fasting to think of that as even an inconvenience; he was already in the dress required for admission to the Papal chapel; so he called the first fiacre, and getting in, said—"San Pietro."

Just before the fiacre reached the Condotti, he observed Fitzalan, who had walked on very rapidly, turning the corner of the Frattina and, as the fiacre rolled into the continuation of the former street toward St. Peter's, he saw a dark-green chariot dash out of the Frattina, cross the Corso, and enter the Piazza di St. Lorenzo in Lucina. He said to himself that it was a carriage from the Hotel d'Angleterre, conveying its owner to St. Peter's at that late hour, and he speculated upon the chance of its reaching the Borghese palace, where the two streets converge, before his own fiacre. It did so, however, cutting in before him by a bare moment, and with so much suddenness, as to compel the driver of the hired vehicle to bring his horses nearly upon their haunches to avoid a collision. It is a drive of nearly twenty minutes, and the powerful steeds which drew the carriage in advance, gained all the way, but not much, for the emulation of the hack-driver was roused. And now occurred an incident which partook in some degree of the terrible.

The chariot drew up at the foot of the vast ascent of the cathedral steps. A gentleman was waiting for it. The door was thrown open, and the steps whirled down by one of a pair of tall footmen in a rich livery of green and gold, and a lady was handed out. The gentleman offered his arm, and they ascended to the church. Clifford paid his fiacre, and followed with such haste has become the lateness of the hour. He overtook them as they reached the *bénitier*, supported by gigantic cherubs, on the left, and the lady dipped the tip of her finger and crossed herself twice. As they advanced up the vast length of the golden nave, now crowded with persons of all ranks, and kept clear in the center by long files of soldiers bristling with plumes and bayonets, Clifford, walking a few yards behind them observed with tranquil curiosity the lady's air and figure. She was, of course, wholly in black; her head, covered only with a veil; and he observed that veil and dress were of the richest materials. Her shape was graceful, her carriage singularly so. When she turned, in passing the chapel of the sacrament, to make a deep reverence, her veil fell forward and concealed her face.

He watched them till they reached the ladies' tribune, on the left of the high altar. It was already filled to the topmost benches, but some one had been sent at an early hour, to secure and retain a place for this distinguished personage—she could scarcely be less; for a lady in the front row, who occupied, indeed, the seat at that extremity of the tribune which is nearest to the Papal throne, and consequently the best place in the church, rose, and ceded it to her.

When a Papal chapel is held at St. Peter's, a space is set off at either side of that parallelogram in front of the high altar, where the pope and

cardinals, and their assistants, sit, and where the ceremonies take place. In front, its limits are marked by a file of the Swiss and Noble Guard; and it is inclosed exteriorly, partly by the pillars of the dome, partly by the ladies, the diplomatic and the royal tribunes; at other points, by the Swiss Guard, who admit within its privileged precinct only ecclesiastics and gentlemen in full dress. Clifford now obtained admission to this part of the church, and got to the front of the ladies' tribune, *a parte sinistra*, which is always free from crowd, because every one is pressing as closely as possible to the line of soldiers, in order to see what is going on. Nothing indeed, can be less like devotion or common reverence than the behavior of all you meet at these great ceremonies, excepting Roman Catholic ladies of high rank. These are always devout. Clifford saw that the fair stranger—whom he had observed perhaps chiefly because her carriage had happened immediately to precede his own to the Basilica—was kneeling in her place, her head bowed upon her hands, which rested on the edge of the front of the tribune.

You might already hear the trumpets which announce the entrance of the sovereign pontiff, borne (in *sede gestatoria*) on men's shoulders, preceded by his cardinals and other dignitaries, and by the Sistine choir, lifting their superhuman voices in the most solemn and the sweetest of harmonies. Still the lady continued at her devotions preparatory to the approaching solemnity, and Clifford drew nearer to her. There was nothing in this to attract any one's notice, as several gentlemen were speaking to their female acquaintance, and some even leaning unceremoniously upon the front of the tribune. He availed himself of the circumstance that the stranger was not looking up, to regard her freely. He could see only the small gloved hands supporting a white forehead; but the whole crown of her exquisitely-shaped head was in view, displaying, as her veil was thrown back over her comb and braid, the soft radiant line that parted her sunny hair. That hair, too, was of a color—the very shade—that at once singularly and painfully interested him, and, except in early childhood, most rare. Altogether, that beautiful head, with those *bandeaux* of waving and golden silk which defined its shape, and which looked yet fairer from the somber hue of all that surrounded him, troubled him. He became exceedingly impatient for her to rise, that he might see her face, and dissipate the painful illusion of which he was sensible.

In the mean time, there was a silence, while the pope descended from his chair, to kneel and adore, in passing, the chapel of the Holy Sacrament. But in a few minutes, the renewed burst of the hymn from the Sistine choir announced that his holiness had finished his devotion, and resumed his progress up the church; and now the lady slowly rose and took her seat.

Clifford staggered toward her, until he grasped the front of the tribune for support. She seemed frightened at first, then looked round, evidently indignant, as if for protection. A chamberlain approached, to interrupt a proceeding so indecorous, but Clifford had fallen on the pavement.

When he recovered, he found himself in one

of the aisles, on the step of an altar. Two or three persons were attending to him; one of these was a priest, another was the chamberlain. They had been using restoratives, and hoped he was better.

"That lady?" he said.

"Whom you frightened so?" said the chamberlain. "She begged me to go and see how you were."

"Do you know her?" asked Clifford, collecting himself.

"Personally, no; her name, yes. 'Tis the Princess Alexina Galitzin. Every one is raving about her."

"She came here with—?"

"Prince Michael Galitzin, her uncle."

"Russians! But she is a Catholic?"

"Her mother was one. She is an orphan, and rich. So her *gouvernante* told me, who has been here since eight, to keep for her the place she has got. But this reverend father, who is also of her suite, and her confessor, can tell you more about that. I am glad to see you well again. I must return to my charge. I wouldn't get into all that crowd again, if I were you."

Clifford turned to the ecclesiastic, a pale man about thirty-five, with dark, intelligent eyes, and whom, by his robes and appearance, he recognized as belonging to the Society of Jesus.

"You are the spiritual director of the lady of whom we speak, father?"

"A light charge, with a soul so spotless and so predisposed to grace. As her confessor, I may well be able to say that."

"She is then of—the Roman church?"

"I think I apprehend the mournful drift of that question," replied the priest, who now was alone with Frederick, "if you are, as I think, the brother of Lord Beauchamp. The Princess Alexina Galitzin was born in the pale of our holy church, which she has never quitted for the paths of heresy. I also am sincerely glad to see you recovered, sir." And the Jesuit left him, with a bow.

Clifford, after walking up and down the aisle a few minutes, returned within the precincts of the papal chapel, where, leaning against the base of a pilaster, he could, unobserved, regard the Princess Alexina. The benediction of the sacred lights, the procession, the passage of the pope, and the kneeling crowd, the pontifical mass, and the elevation, attracted not his attention. He could not reproach himself, however, with this irreverent pre-occupation in a sacred place, and during a holy rite, for he was unconscious of it; and perhaps, too, there are occasions when all visible sanctities may be disregarded. The Princess Alexina, apparently, did not share his distraction. If he did not notice the procession of the service, she noticed nothing else. Whether she rose at the Gospel, or knelt at the mention of the Incarnation, when the Sistine choir were vocalizing the glorious Credo, or bowed her head in yet deeper reverence at the consecration of the Host, while, amid the blaze of innumerable candles and the ascent of clouds of incense, the most awful silence reigned for those few moments in the circuit of those golden courts, hushing the multitudes that bent over the marble pavement—a sentiment of absorbing devotion appeared to oc-

cupy a soul which inhabited a temple more beautiful than gold, and bronze, and lights, and incense, and the celestial pomp of the ritual could render that wondrous fabric; a temple more holy than the vast surrounding shrine in which she worshiped, and destined, with all its frailty, to an existence of immortal luster, in which the scored centuries of the Basilica should be utterly forgotten.

When the ceremonies were finished, and the pope had retired as he came, while the well-attired crowd were dispersing, Clifford felt tempted to advance and address the high-born girl, whose living presence had overpowered him like a supernatural vision, or a visitant from other worlds. But he saw her instantly surrounded by friends. Several, whom he knew to be Russians of rank, addressed her; the French ambassador, also, greeted her, as she came out of the tribune, and took the arm of a gentleman, whom, in effect, he now recognized as Prince Galitzin. He remembered that the prince was staying at the Angleterre. And now, she swept down the church, with her rich dress and superb carriage. As they came opposite the chapel of the Holy Sacrament, with its ever-burning golden lamps, she turned and sank, once more, gracefully on one knee for an instant, making the sign of the cross. She took holy water, as before, at the gigantic aspersorium. Led by an irresistible impulse, he followed her out of the church, saw her descend the gradual hill-like slope of the cathedral steps, and enter her carriage. The prince took his seat by her side, and the chariot was whirled away to find its place in the long line that was hurrying from St. Peter's to the Bridge of Sant' Angelo.

Louise touched his arm. She was leaning on that of Augustus.

"You have seen her," she whispered. "'Tis a resemblance past belief—really shocking. Clarie fainted, and had to be carried out of the church. Her mother was French, they say, and she has been educated in a convent at Paris. She arrived in Rome only a few days since, to join her uncle, and they are to leave for Naples to-morrow."

"I am glad of that," said Clifford, with a shudder. "I would not stay in a city where I was exposed to meet her—not for the world!"

CHAPTER IV.

CLIFFORD returned, with his brother, to the Via Gregoriana, and remained, during the rest of the day, in his apartments. He seemed to have fallen once more into the state in which he had existed immediately after the loss of Alice. He took no food all day, refusing even the refreshment which Louise herself brought him. Late in the afternoon Grace came in, and remained for some hours with her brother. At eight o'clock, he said that he must go. Fitzalan was to return home early, on account of his morrow's journey, and he wanted to be with him every moment that he could. This expression threw Grace into great agitation.

In the open air, and hurrying down the Scalinata with the idea of again seeing Fitzalan, a

certain degree of tranquil happiness returned to him. Their parting, truly, was a desolating thought, but he consoled himself by thinking it would be temporary. He meant to make an arrangement, to-night, that would secure their never being separated again. In his society the terrible incident of that day should be forgotten. But when he arrived at his rooms, he found that his friend had not yet returned. Luigi (whom the reader will not have forgotten) brought in his master's slippers, and a magnificent Indian robe.

"So, the Signor Fitzalan leaves us to-morrow morning?" said Luigi, in a rather significant tone.

"He does," said Clifford, looking up languidly. "And I shall follow him to Naples, Luigi."

"I am glad to hear your Signory say that," said Luigi, with a marked cheerfulness. Luigi had been restless for a day or two, but this announcement evidently set his mind at rest. Clifford waited at least an hour for Fitzalan. Most men, when obliged thus unexpectedly to wait, especially if the delay abridges the time left for what they deem of importance, become fidgety and restless, are tormented with anxiety lest the person attended should not come at all, and, if it be a friend, get jealous and resentful at his want of punctuality, or want of affection. Clifford sate calm and motionless, only glancing now and then sorrowfully at his watch. At last, there was a noise in Fitzalan's dressing-room. He started up, but it was only Rosa, going in to replenish Signor Fitzalan's fire.

She unbolted the door, however. Clifford went into his friend's apartment, and told Rosa she need not trouble herself further, as he should sit up for Mr. Fitzalan. Rosa was their Italian chambermaid, housekeeper, and cook, who did every thing for Fitzalan: a handsome girl of two-and-twenty, clever, animated, simple, skillful, and neat. She wore the charming costume of her mountain district, and, being very ambitious of a slender waist, seemed ever on the point of bursting her crimson bodice.

"If you please, Signor Clifford," she said, "the Signor Fitzalan will be charmed to find you here, but he will not be satisfied with me if I leave the door of this *camera* unbolted; he is particular to the last degree about that. So I shall bolt it, *con permesso*. *Felicissima notte, Signore!*"

"I see you expect a kiss, Rosa, but I have made a vow never to offer that compliment to any woman again, and, though you are very handsome, I must not break it. But here is my hand, if you have a mind to take it."

"I will kiss your hand, Signor Clifford. *Madonna!* how soft it is! *Maria Santissima!* 'tis the hand of a contessa. But good night, Signor Clifford."

Clifford put out the candles which Rosa had thought fit to light, and seated himself by Fitzalan's fire. Another half hour passed, and Fitzalan did not arrive. He found himself singularly and inopportunistically disposed to sleep; he felt, in fact, the exhaustion of his long fast. Thinking the evening air would dissipate his somnolence, he mounted to the studio, and went out upon the terrace.

The night was warm and not clear; a moist, depressing sirocco. He leaned over the parapet,

and looked down upon the Corso, with its gloomy line of infrequent lamps. As it was Sunday night, there were no lights from the shop windows. The street was empty, and silent. In a couple of hours it would be rattling with carriages, conveying ladies to the masked balls, which, on Sundays of the Carnival, commence precisely at midnight, that is, do not commence till Monday morning. He thought of the fancy ball at Wessex House, and the beauty and love of Alice Stuart. And then recurred the cruel resemblance he had that day been startled with, in which Providence itself, and Nature, seemed arrayed against him. He was not the victim of his own diseased perceptions. Louise had been shocked; Clarinelle had fainted. Was it possible that Alice yet lived? Not unless she had ceased to be Alice—unless she had lost the memory of her past existence, or become capable of cruelty beyond belief. Instances of an identity so absolute as to deceive the whole world, and the most intimate connections, were certainly on record, and every thing in his life, and especially in his relations with Alice Stuart, had shown that he was marked for trials of unparalleled severity. Was it to be wondered at, he asked with humiliation, since he had had the presumption to deem himself a being of unparalleled force?

While he yielded to these bitter meditations, he had gradually sunk upon a bench ranged along the parapet, and his head rested on the arm with which he supported himself. It was a position of complete repose. His thoughts became confused; the warm, oppressive atmosphere weighed upon his senses, and he slept.

CHAPTER V.

It was a drawing-room in the Hotel d'Angleterre. The Princess Alexina Galitzin stood by the fire, gazing into it with profound abstraction. Her fingers were playing with a small rosary of pearls attached to the girdle of the same rich black dress which she had worn at St. Peter's.

"My charming princess," said a beautiful woman, sitting near her, "console yourself. The worst is now over. You can not have another trial like that of this morning."

"Did they mean me to kill him?" said the princess, without taking her eyes from the blazing hearth.

"Perhaps such a consequence would not have been an unwelcome one, though I don't think they intended it."

"I can bear it no longer. To be made the instrument of active torture is too much. Neither did I suppose that this name which you have made me assume, ever really belonged to another."

"Well, the true Princess Alexina will hardly complain of the robbery, sweet lady, since she died in her cradle."

"Would to God I had so died!" said the unhappy girl. "I must go to my mother," she added, in a hurried tone. "Their lives are all made sad, as his is widowed. And I am the cause—the guilty cause. Yes: I will write to Stratherne this instant, and bid him come and

take me under his protection." And she turned to a table where were writing materials, and seated herself, with an air of determination.

"I have told you a thousand times, my sweet friend, that I would do so in your place. How can such a promise bind you? You say that if you had a right to make it in order to save your life and honor, then you are obliged to keep it. I don't dispute that strictly this is so; but I am sure that the violation, in your case, will be a very venial sin, which you can repent of afterward, at your leisure. Why, what are all the world doing? All promise, to get what they want, and afterward either forget their engagements, or find out that they can not conscientiously observe them. It is the rule, from the prince to the beggar."

Alice laid down her pen, and pushed away the paper.

"Your avowal at any time will in no respect compromise the prince, observe. In affording an asylum to an innocent and persecuted lady of the highest descent, he honors his own house; and he believes—I think you have assured him—that his fidelity to your secret will be the greatest kindness to you. All the Russians are enchanted with you, and it excites no surprise that you speak, like a native, every polished European language but their own, which is not polished. You will like the court of St. Petersburg, and are just the person to fascinate the emperor. You will have to resort to ambition. Now that love is over with you, I suppose, and your art must no longer be pursued, it is the only thing left to occupy such talents as yours. I take it quite for granted that the grand duke *héritier* will fall in love with you, and this is doubtless the intention of that Providence in which you so devoutly believe, in permitting all your strange adversities. You will then confess who you are, and Nicholas will give his consent, for, after all, your blood is royal; or if he do not, something will happen to him just in the right time (for the thing is fated) and so you will end by being a czarina."

"If I am going to this dinner at the ambassador's, I must dress," said Alice, looking at her watch.

"If you are as quick," said her companion, laughing, "as we were this morning in making the exchange in the carriage, you will not require much time. Certainly never was any thing better managed than that."

"You have no heart, Augusta."

"You do me injustice. But I admit that the only person in the world for whom I have any feeling is yourself. No," continued Lady Fitzjames, after a pause, during which Alice had quitted the room, "I really love and pity her, but, as Padre Matteo says, so great a fortune, not to say so peerless a bride, must not be the reward of a renegade. And, really, it may save both their souls. If Clifford be driven quite to despair, he may repent of his apostasy, which certainly has been visited by the judgments of Heaven; and as for Lady Alice, she is on the very threshold of conversion. It is a great step that she is now, in name, a Catholic. But I must write to Mark."

And Lady Fitzjames took the seat Alice had just quitted, drew toward her the paper and

pen the latter had pushed away, and wrote thus:—

"She is quietly settled at last, and I have no rear, will go through with it now, though, once or twice, I thought it was all over. But I think it decidedly best, to avoid all suspicion, that *Fitzalan* should really go to Naples."

This was directed to the Baron von Schwartzthal, Hotel de Russie, and instantly dispatched.

It was about nine in the evening; her day of sad representation was over, and Alice was returning for her last night at the Via Pontefice. She had stopped at Lehmann's on her way, to bid them farewell, and make some last arrangements with those faithful friends. Heinrich was now her companion.

"I think all is now understood," said Alice, as they turned out of the Corso into the Pontefice. "You must tell all my friends that I anticipated the time of my departure in order to avoid the embarrassment of a farewell—which is the simple truth. Mr. Clifford alone will necessarily be on the spot to take leave of me, and I shall know how to persuade him to do so without so much as descending to the street. He is a person of great delicacy. In this way, it will not transpire that I quitted Rome without a companion. Your fidelity, dear Heinrich, I know I can depend on."

"It kills me, *Fitzalan*, to think that we are to see you no more. And Maria!—she has done nothing but weep all day."

"She has been a true sister to me; and thou, Heinrich, a brother. But you must not say things to soften me. I have before me a harder parting than even with you, and one which, to go through, requires all my firmness. Therefore, do not embrace me, either, for him I must not embrace as I would. *Leb' Wohl!*"

"*Leb' Wohl!*," said Lehmann, kissing the hand she offered as they now reached her door. "*Leb' Wohl*, beautiful and gifted! May you yet be happy as you deserve!"

He rushed away through the darkness, and Alice was about to open her door with a large double key, when a hand, laid gently upon her shoulder, arrested her. A tall man, cloaked to the eyes, and with a slouching hat, stood before her.

"It is I, Lady Alice."

"Matson!"

"Will you have the goodness to follow me to the Piazza del Popolo, where we can speak freely without being overheard."

Alice followed without a word, but when they had got into the Corso asked—"When did you arrive?"

"I have been in Rome six weeks."

Nothing more was said till they reached the obelisk in the center of the square. The steps of the base were wet with the sirocco, but Matson instantly took off his cloak and folded it into a sort of cushion for Lady Alice, and she seated herself by one of the fountains. When he had satisfied himself that no eaves-droppers were lurking behind the spouting lions at the four corners of the base, he returned to her.

"Your ladyship sets off for Naples to-morrow morning?"

"It has been signified to me that I must, by one who acts in your name."

"And there the artist, *Fitzalan*, will disap-

pear, and you will henceforth enjoy a station at least not inferior to that in which you were born, Lady Alice."

"To be free forever from this disguise, so cruelly imposed on me is, at least, one source of comfort."

"There is a condition upon which I can release you from your promise altogether."

Alice uttered a faint cry. "Name it," she said, half rising.

"Listen to me, Lady Alice. With what design I became the agent of Lord Wessex in your abduction you know as well as I. You were protected by a higher power, I believe; so I gave you up to the marquis, as I had originally engaged to do. He did not trust to violence, but to the continual importunity that they say will cause the gates of Heaven itself to fly open. Had he succeeded, I was to have had your brother's personalty, as I have his legacy; but I never would have robbed you, Lady Alice. If I had restored you to your friends, as once I was nearly determind, I would not have touched a farthing of the wealth you offered."

"I never thought you mean," said Lady Alice.

"Well, I *would* have released you from your oath," continued Matson, "when I had touched that quarter of a million that Wessex got on a false proof of your death. He would have had to pay it back, so that I should have been putting my hands into his coffers, and not yours. There would have been retributive justice in that, I flatter myself; not to say that all he has is mine, if there were any righteousness in human laws."

"He is their brother," thought Alice.

"But, since Augusta found out where you were, and got into her own hands the means of ruining Wessex and destroying me, you see, the case is altered. Augusta it is who disposes of you; and that is what I am coming to. It rests with yourself to satisfy her and those by whom she is guided."

"Go on."

"You don't scruple passing for a Roman Catholic, and, for my part, I can't see how you differ from one. You confess; you believe in the intercession of the Saints, and think it pious to invoke them; you adopt *all* their customs; provided they will give you absolution and communion, you agree never to be present at any other worship than the Roman."

"So long as I am living beyond the jurisdiction of the Church of England," said Alice.

"But the instant I set my foot on the British soil, or so much as on a British deck, I am, as ever, an Anglo-Catholic."

"Well then, yield that point—merely that. Consent to do, as Lady Alice Stuart, and in your native country—to which you will in that case be immediately restored—what you are doing as Princess Alexina Galitzin. The point of a formal recantation will be softened, or, perhaps, entirely dispensed with. It can be supposed to have already taken place. Give me your simple word to this effect, and you need not go to Naples. You may go immediately and claim the protection of your friend Lady Beauchamp—in short, you are free from this moment."

Alice was silent, as if revolving this proposition.

"Think," pursued Matson, "what a mere formality it is, for one who thinks as you do. And I repeat, it is your only chance."

"I hardly know," said Alice, in a voice of tranquil dejection, "if I ought to content myself with a peremptory refusal, or should add my reasons. I am a Christian and a Catholic already, nor will I ever refuse to be treated as such, since it is entirely my right. I love also and revere the Apostolic Church of Rome, and in these countries I avail myself, without scruple, of the means of grace which it offers. It is for the priests who absolve and communicate me, to consider whether they can do so conscientiously, knowing who I am and what I believe. No one is deceived by me, who has any right to know the truth.—No;" continued Alice, rising and speaking with sudden warmth, "the love of the mother who bore and nourished me—the name of my father—the brave protection of my brethren—the sweetness of sisterly confidence—my dear country—my allegiance—and the dearest—the plighted—affections of my own heart, I can put away, and appear to forget. I have seen him who is more precious to me than my own life, faint at my feet, and forbore to breathe the single word which could have dispelled his agony. But the Church in which I was regenerated by baptism, enlightened by faith, strengthened by the Spirit, and nourished with the grace, of Christ—before I forget to love and honor that spiritual mother, much more before I disown her authority and her worship, the heart of Alice Stuart must have ceased to feel what is honest, and her mind to appreciate what is true, and she will be numbered with those justly accursed who call evil good, and good evil."

"You are the best judge," replied Matson, after regarding her for some time in silence. "My motive is entirely your own good. For me, it is better as it is. The possession of this power over you is my security. I have rank that gives me the entrée I want, and wealth enough to make life agreeable; not so much of either as to attract an unpleasant degree of attention. Now, Lord Wessex, who has no such weapon, lives a life to which, begging your pardon, the condition of the damned is preferable. They, at least, know the worst. He lives in perpetual fear of exposure. He has been bullied by his sister into this marriage, which, besides the misery and humiliation of it in other respects, is sure to be without children; so that, when he dies, Augusta will have every thing. He has absolutely got nothing for his share in the transaction, but the consciousness of being a villain, and the daily apprehension of being a detected one; to say nothing of Augusta's remorseless tyranny. I wouldn't be in his shoes for his marquisate and his fortune twice over. He was a cat's paw in the beginning, and now he is the veriest of slaves."

Matson had been sufficiently cautious, he thought, in taking up his position; but it offered one unguarded point. Another individual had been watching in the Pontefice for the return of Alice; had observed Matson's arrival in the street, and his speaking to her; had followed them to the Piazza; by keeping in the line of the obelisk had contrived to approach unseen; and, for a considerable time, had been an unsuspected listener. At the last words of Mat-

son, this person darted forward from behind one of the fountains, and threw himself upon the speaker.

"Liar and scoundrel!" cried the intruder, in a voice stifled with passion.

There was a short and furious struggle, which Alice witnessed with consternation. Lord Wessex caught Matson by the throat, and seemed disposed to strangle him in good earnest; but the latter, by far the more vigorous of the two, forced his assailant back against the fountain, behind which he had been concealed. Still the marquis did not relax his hold.

"You throttle me," gasped Matson. "Let go, or I'll keel you over into the drink."

In another instant, by a powerful effort, he in fact succeeded in throwing his furious antagonist off his balance, and the marquis went over, backward, into the deep basin. It was now the latter who was in danger of drowning, for Matson fiercely held him under, and there was a hollow gurgling sound of his escaping breath: but Alice sprang forward, shrieking for help.

"Pull him out," she cried, "or you hang for it."

Matson drew out Lord Wessex, perfectly insensible. He had laid him at length on one of the steps, when a sentinel, within call, but who, in the darkness of the night, could not have witnessed the affair, came running up to see what was the matter.

"The signore has fallen into the fountain and nearly been drowned," said Matson, with a laugh; "but we have got him out and he will come to in a few minutes. *Ecco!*"

"I thought I heard a woman scream," said the soldier.

"It was this youth calling '*aiuto*;' he thought I could not get the man out without help."

Lord Wessex began to gasp, and show signs of life.

"Is he an Englishman?" demanded the soldier.

"We are all English."

"Eh!" said the sentinel, shrugging his shoulders. "'Twould be better to have the signore carried home."

"Call a carriage, Matson" said lady Alice, in a tone of authority. "In the Piazza di Spagna you will find one."

Matson obeyed. He was gone but five minutes, for he encountered a fiacre in the Baboio. When he returned, Lord Wessex was conscious. He rose with some difficulty, refusing Matson's assistance, but aided by the soldier and Lady Alice, got into the carriage.

Alice gave the name of the hotel, and put the expected double Paolo into the hands of the sentinel, and the fiacre drove off. The soldier walked back to his post; Alice quitted the Piazza without another word to her late companion; and Matson, having followed her with his eyes, till she disappeared in the obscurity of the Corso, crossed over the illumined portal of the Hotel de Russie.

CHAPTER VI.

ALICE seems covered now with the dust and soil of earthly conflict. Fraud and violence sur-

round her; she is the victim of deceit and forced herself to become a guileless deceiver; though innocent, she blushes for herself; and a life of conscious rectitude is yet one that pains her almost like guilt. It is undoubtedly the case that there are a great many situations in life where the right course to be taken is really an intricate and doubtful problem; and to some persons, who would never hesitate where duty is unequivocal, this seems (as a great thinker has observed) to be a probation. Alice, for example, was so habitually convinced that whatever was right must be done at all hazards, and that it would be for the best in the end, that the real fairness and honesty of her mind could scarcely be tested except by a case occurring for her decision where a great deal could be plausibly said on both sides, where duties seemed to conflict, and a sanction that she deeply feared to violate, was arrayed against the instincts of affection and that social prescription, which even when it has consecrated error, is so difficult to resist.

It had never seemed so gloomy a thing to this innocent and unhappy lady, to unlock at night that private door in the Via Pontefici, and find herself in darkness, at the foot of her narrow stair. She lighted a coil of *cerino*, deposited in a corner of the landing-place. Thus armed, she ascended to her own rooms, securing, as she passed, the inner and outer doors. It was ten o'clock. The fire had gone down a little. She replenished it, and lit the candles. She then hastened to go to Frederick, whom she believed to be waiting for her in his own apartment; but, on arriving at the threshold of her own dressing-room, the sight of her portmanteaus ready packed was too much for her firmness. She seemed deserted by Heaven. It was not till she had returned to her own room, and there, throwing herself on her knees before the image of her Saviour, had lifted her thoughts to His Heavenly Throne, that she was able to resume sufficient calmness to go forward to this interview without the certainty of betraying herself. Then, at length, she dried her tears, and drew the bolt which Rosa had so carefully made fast, knocked gently, and, receiving no answer, entered, though cautiously.

Clifford's saloon was dark. She brought one of her own candles. His fire was nearly out; articles of his dress lay on a sofa. Was it possible he had retired to rest without waiting for her? Her cheek glowed at the thought. Then she remembered his swoon at St. Peter's. He might be ill. She went through the other rooms of the suite. In the last she found Luigi. Now Luigi was quite aware that his master was in Mr. Fitzalan's rooms, having just learned so much from Rosa, yet he did not scruple to answer to Lady Alice's troubled inquiry, that, 'his Excellency' was gone to bed. He even offered to call him, but Alice blushed, and said she would on no account disturb his master. Luigi would not for his life—in fact he dared not—have told his master an untruth; but, in his master's supposed or real interest, or in most cases where a lie seemed convenient, he had as little scruple as most Italians. What withheld him from speaking truth in this instance was, his fear of interfering in any way in his master's plans. "If his signory," he said, "was ambushed in

Signor Fitzalan's apartment, he had his reasons, doubtless, upon which it did not become him to speculate."

Before retiring again to her own room, Alice looked on all the tables for some penciled note that might perhaps apologize for this apparent unkindness. She was persuaded that he had received a shock from seeing her at the Basilica, which indisposed him to encounter even a friend like Fitzalan, or, perhaps, Fitzalan most of all. She left open the intermediate doors while she sang the *Compline* as usual, and her *Evening Hymn*. Now, if he wished to see her, he would undoubtedly throw on his robe and come out. She burst into another flood of passionate tears as she bolted, at last, reluctantly, the door which communicated between her dressing-room and his apartment. Could it bet hat Heaven denied to her prayers the consolation of a parting interview?—in which, though she must feign a calmness that her heart belied, and bestow but a fraternal caress, as if she were of his sex, instead of throwing herself on his breast and pouring out there her wild grief and love, yet at least she should hear his voice of gentle affection, and feel the kind, lingering pressure of his hand, perhaps, on the score of her youth, receive one warmer embrace. But Alice was too pious for such passion to continue. She undressed herself murmuring hymns, and fell asleep repeating those beautiful psalms of the *Compline*, which ever, in their evening rite, had seemed made expressly for her case, but which never before had come to her heart with such soothing power.*

Meanwhile, we have left Frederick Clifford sleeping on the open roof. It is scarcely a safe thing to do, especially in Rome. The system is never so susceptible as during sleep to the influence of malaria, and that influence is never so deleterious as during the night. An elevated position is certainly less dangerous than another, but in the region lying between the Corso and the Tiber, is not to be depended on as a security. Clifford was awakened by a profound uneasiness and febrile thirst. He had outslept the rush of carriages at midnight.

He was immediately conscious of his imprudence, and rose as hastily as some stiffness would permit. It seemed to him that the palace vibrated as he rose.

The clock of a neighboring church struck loud and clear. It struck once only; that is to say, it was seven hours of Roman time; for, in Rome, time is reckoned from sunset, and the clocks strike six hours instead of twelve, and then recommence. This might be between two and three in the morning, by the computation of the rest of the world. Four hours and upward he had slept, which was all that his exceptional organization usually required in the twenty-four, a peculiarity which partly accounted for Clifford's extraordinary attainments.

Clifford, wont to move in the dark as confidently and securely as in broad day, tottered now as he groped his way to the studio stair. Yet he hardly perceived his disorder, so acutely did he feel at that moment the loss of that parting interview with Fitzalan, and the concomitant

* The *Compline* psalms are the 4th, six verses of the 31st, the 91st, and the 134th.

idea of having wounded his young friend by any apparent and unaccountable neglect.

In slippers of velvet, and treading as noiselessly as possible, he descended the little stair. When he reached the landing-place at its foot, which, it will be remembered, had on one side the glazed door of Fitzalan's dressing-room, and on the other was open into the chamber itself, he perceived, by the flickering light of a brand that yet blazed on the hearth, that the young artist was gone to bed, as he had anticipated. The curtain was partly drawn, and both the outline of his figure and its curving shadow on the wall were visible.

Clifford did not even think of awakening his young friend. The feminine reserves that Alice never lost sight of, tinged inexplicably the sentiment with which he regarded Fitzalan. Clifford was not a man to have felt indifferent to the question whether one, even of his own sex, bound to him by a friendship so tender, possessed, or no, a conscience undefiled by transgression. Without a word being exchanged on such a topic, he was too profound a student of moral character, his moral instincts were too infallible, for him to entertain a doubt that Fitzalan was one of whom he should not think but with religious reverence. And thus, at present, the repose of this chamber seemed to him as sacred, as if he had known the sex of its occupant, around whom breathed, at any rate, the very atmosphere of chastity. Frederick hesitated, therefore, to gratify his tenderness by stealing to the bedside for one look at his friend's sleeping form. He trembled and half-reproached himself, as, nevertheless, he ventured to do so.

Fitzalan lay in a position of natural slumber. As the curtains were drawn round the upper part of the couch, cutting off the uncertain fire-light, Clifford could only distinguish generally amid the shadowy white of the surrounding draperies, a more softly-tinted face, of angelic aspect, in which, as he bent to see it more distinctly, he recognized once more that countenance of sweet, yet almost death-like repose, which first he had gazed upon on the shore of Vietri. He drew back with a pang.

"Perhaps it is better," he said to himself, "that I should part with him thus."

Some of the articles on the table by the bedside caught his eye as he turned to go.

"That crucifix, which reposes on his bed all day, as if to sanctify it! But the living members of Christ which repose there now, are more holy than this sculptured image. Is that what he wishes to suggest to others, and remind himself?"

Another object was his own portrait, an oil miniature, painted by Fitzalan. It seemed to have been the last thing looked at. There was also a little watch, and Clifford took it up with curiosity; for Fitzalan never looked at his watch, at least before him. It was a lady's watch—excessively small, and he remembered to have seen such an one once before, at his first encounter with Lady Alice Stuart. He had taken it up from her tartan to ascertain what time she had left for that innocent toilet, during which he had been her happy and already devoted sentinel. There might be a hundred such watches in existence, and ten thousand similar chains, yet he had never seen the chain on

Fitzalan's breast without thinking of Anne, and now a wild glimpse of the truth flashed across his mind, as lightning illumines an abyss for one instant, leaving it darker than before.

"What insanity!" he said, internally. "Am I about to become the victim of illusions conjured up by my own, at last, unbalanced mind?"

He felt ashamed of his thought; but, as he put down the watch with a feeling of this sort, and yet with a determination to draw the curtain, and by a distincter view of his friend's form and countenance, quiet the importunate suggestion, his eye was caught by another object, which sent all the blood in his body back upon his heart, and he had nearly swooned as in the Basilica. It was an article, almost trivial—one that Alice used only in her matin toilet, to secure the abundant tresses which, the better to preserve, she unbraided at night. It was that ivory comb, with the bas-relief carving of the hours and minute legend, which had attracted his attention at Vietri. He recollected that Alice had worn it the morning that she was lost. And Fitzalan's sister, and the Princess Alexina!

He grew faint. There was a glass of water on the table, and he drank it off, mechanically. He tottered to the sofa, and threw himself upon it. He feared to approach again, and lay with a throbbing pulse and whirling brain, a throng of remembrances rushing confusedly upon him, while the power to reduce them to order or sequence seemed lost.

Alice stirred. She put aside the curtain, took the glass which Clifford had just emptied, and raised it to her lips. He could not see the expression of her countenance, nor distinctly her lineaments, by the fainter light of the expiring brand, but the action was evident. She replaced the glass on the table, threw off the bed-clothes, and sprang lightly out. She flitted with the glass, dreamily, as if half awake, to the console, where stood a decanter of water. She drank, re-filled the glass, and, more deliberately, not to spill its contents, returned and replaced it on the table. Without seeing her face, it had been clear, by the step, the attire, that it was a woman; but, at this moment, the brand shot out a bright tongue of flame, which revealed both face and figure completely.

"Alice!" He threw himself at her feet, with that cry of incredulous joy.

She gave a little shriek, but immediately perceiving who it was faltered his name. Clifford blushed almost as deeply as herself, as he folded her in a tender embrace, then drew her toward the fire, and gazed as if he doubted still his own senses, at her face so rapidly changing. He kissed her forehead, her lips, her hands, in a sort of delirium. She had too much sensibility herself to expect him to be calm in such a moment; but her eyes wandered around for her dressing-robe, which lay on a chair. He enveloped her in it, without either having spoken, piled the fire with dry faggots from the pannier, sat down, and, placing her on his knee, folded his arms once more around her form.

Indeed, it was more than human nature is capable of, to restrain, at such a moment, the expression of feelings which their mutual reverence but rendered more deep. We may take it for a scene of passion as pure as a *ral*. And,

as her lover calmed, Alice, in her turn, permitted herself to press her lips again and again to his burning forehead, and then she would lay her head fondly on his shoulder and slightly sob.

By-and-by they both were tranquil enough to talk in low, tender whispers. Clifford did not need to be told that the will and conscience of Alice were somehow mysteriously fettered. Indeed, he asked her few questions, and those chiefly, as it seemed, to discover if she would answer them. Now that he had found out who Fitzalan was, it needed little more than a rapid résumé of what he already knew, to enable him to divine the rest.

"I must put myself in the place of your oppressors," he said, tightening round her his clasp arm. "We shall see if I can not force you into a marriage. I do not quit you, Alice, for one moment, till you have uttered a wife's vow before that altar where we have so often knelt. Knowing that such is my resolution, I think that when I summon hither, to-morrow morning, an excellent Roman priest of my acquaintance, the Princess Alexina Galitzin (under protest of suffering violence if she pleases) will scarcely refuse me her hand."

"You will do as you like," said Alice, in a hushed voice. This was, indeed, a restraint that made amends for the past.

"It will be supposed that you have gone to Naples," continued Clifford. "I shall take care that this is believed. No one then will know that you are my prisoner. Under those circumstances, you must make a virtue of necessity."

In fact, this appeared to settle the matter. The oath of Alice was limited by its own terms, and by the nature of things. She was a great deal more in Frederick's power than she had ever been in that of Matson or Lord Wessex. For her lover had two allies that rendered a contest with him hopeless—society, which would support his claims—and her own heart. She begged his permission to leave him, at least to dress; but Clifford said resolutely, "No;" she had once, by her own forced connivance, been carried off before his own eyes; that should not happen twice; absolutely, he would not suffer her to quit his sight. Alice wept, and promised to do nothing that could displease him without at least giving him fair notice; and finally, after weighing the matter, satisfied that he lost no advantage by it, he accepted her parole. He advised her, however, in lieu of dressing, to return to her couch.

"You had an exhausting day, dearest, yesterday, I am sure; and another is before you."

There were, indeed, yet some hours left of the night. Alice offered him her cheek, with tender submission; he left her, and she returned to her couch. She was somewhat surprised, a moment after, when Clifford re-entered the room, drew the sofa across the landing-place of the studio stair, thus cutting off the access to the dressing-room, and then lay down upon it. She contented herself, however, with drawing her curtains closely round. She wept some more passionate tears upon her pillow, till, deeply calmed by the idea to which she ever returned, that she was under that dear, entirely-trusted, and determined protection, she yielded to the rapid reaction after so much excitement, and

sank into a profound sleep. She was awakened by a touch. The grayest gleam of morning twilight discovered a dark form sitting on the bed's edge, within the half-opened curtains.

"Clifford! what is it, my friend?"

"I have had a strange dream, Fitzalan. I thought you were Alice Stuart—Alice Stuart that I lost. I think it is because I got asleep on your terrace."

"On the terrace?"

"Yes, on the leads. Don't laugh at me, Fitzalan, but tell me truly.—Are you really Alice Stuart?"

She lay perfectly quiet, in consternation, while he passed his hand gently over the parting of her hair.

"Dear Frederick, do you doubt who I am?"

"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

"He is wild. . You are ill, Fred.—His hand is hot—and tremulous:—his breath—feverish, too."

"Where are you going?"

"To order Rosa to get ready a bath for you, my dear Clifford."

"No, no; you are not to communicate with any one but me. You want to write to Lady Fitzjames, to let her know that I have found out who you are."

"Dear Frederick, I have promised to do nothing of that sort without giving you notice. I shall not leave you—perhaps never—certainly not now. There, lie down on the sofa, and I will step over it. What! not let me pass!"

"Never!" said Clifford, who had sunk on the sofa, exhausted and panting.

While she considered the possible consequences of calling for assistance, the vetturino, who had been ordered at day-break, began to thunder at the lower or street door, as if to wake the dead. She went to the window. He sprang up, and darted forward to prevent her opening it, but brought up wide of the mark, like one intoxicated. She seized the opportunity, and was in the dressing-room in a moment. She turned to assure him that she had no intention of escaping; he uttered a piercing cry, and she saw him fall upon the bed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE author of the knocking which had the effect of releasing Alice from her distressing position, was not the vetturino precisely, but a *facchino*, or common porter, dispatched by him to awaken his fare, and get down the luggage, against the arrival of the vettura. As no one appeared at the door or window, this fellow, with the commendable disregard of a neighborhood's repose usually evinced by his class, continued his operations on the knocker, in a style to make a London footman blush. The effect, in due time, was to cause the opening of several windows, the protrusion of several heads, night-capped, or otherwise, and an animated Italian conversation, carried on at a high key, on both sides. Presently, several persons appeared in the street.

The first was a young lady, very unaccustomed to walk the streets at that early hour—our friend, Grace Clifford. She approached the

facchino, and timidly demanded what was the matter.

"*Cosa c'è? signora!* Why, the matter is, that a signor in the third story of this number is to start for Naples this morning in a vettura, and I can't wake him."

"Will the vettura go without him?"

"Yes, signora, it must; for the whole interior is taken by four other Inglesi, and it is a return carriage, do you see?"

"Don't knock any more," said Grace, seeing he was about to re-commence.

"But, signora, why not?"

"For *this* reason," replied the lady, holding up her purse, and showing, through the meshes, the silver sheen of a scudo.

"Your excellency is very right. Why should we wake the whole city because one man is, without doubt, either deaf or dead?"

The night-caps were drawn in, the windows closed, and the street subsided into its wonted quiet. And now the Marquis of Wessex arrived on the ground, entering the Pontefici from the Corso, with an uncertain step and agitated air. The sight of Grace Clifford did not probably tend to restore his composure. That young lady, on the other hand, greeted the marquis with great *sang-froid*. The appearance of a man of her own society, be he who he might, gave her instantly the self-possession, which a fear of the strange sort of people she might possibly encounter, had in some degree disturbed.

"My friend, Mr. Fitzalan," observed Grace, "has singularly devoted friends. It's not every young artist in Rome whose departure for Naples would call your lordship from your bed at this hour. And as for me, I fear it must give your lordship a strange idea of my sense of propriety, to find me waiting at his door on such an occasion."

"Spare me, Miss Clifford. Your reproaches can hardly add to what I feel."

"Of what use is feeling?" said Grace, indignantly, "when you go on doing the most cruel and dastardly things. Were I a man, sir—but I will tell you what I will do, being a woman. I will proclaim you publicly a villain and a coward, and my brothers shall maintain it. Your hours are numbered, my lord. You know as well as I that Frederick Clifford is master of every weapon that man can wield, and, except the choice by which of them you will die, I protest to you, by the honor of my house, and my own, there is none left you."

"It is well," said the marquis, more composed. "I desire nothing more ardently, except one thing, which, unhappily, is no more in my power than in yours."

And now, the Baron von Schwartzthal and the Earl of Stratherne entered the Pontefici, at the same moment. But for the sex of Grace you would have said that it was a duel, and in her present dispositions it seemed not unlikely to lead to one. As Lord Stratherne advanced toward her, with a look of blended deprecation and firmness, she held out her hand to him with cordiality.

"Courtenay," she said, "I have long regarded you as a brother, and more than a brother. I know that you are incapable of a thought, or an action, that is not generous and manly, and you have the highest moral courage—but I have

feared that you wanted spirit—not personal bravery—but the spirit to resent and punish the dishonoring injuries which men who disgrace the name might offer to the defenseless, and to women especially. Tell me—are you, or are you not, a knight and a gentleman? You wear a sword, I think, as a noble. Do you wear it—do you think God gave it you—in vain?"

"My dear Grace," said Lord Stratherne, much agitated, "what does this mean? Has any one dared?"

"Yes, that man has dared," she said, pointing to Lord Wessex. "I ask you, as a brother, to avenge an atrocious insult offered to a sister, in doing which you will be defending the chastity of all the sisters and brides in the world. If you decline the office, here comes one who will undertake it."

In fact, Miss Clifford's leaving the house unattended, at so early an hour, had alarmed her maid, who deemed it her duty to apprise Lady Beauchamp. Lord Beauchamp had risen in great haste, and sallied forth in quest of his sister, directing his steps in the first instance, very naturally, to Fitzalan's apartments. He knew little more of Grace's character than of an absolute stranger's; and his idea was, that she was going off to Naples with the young artist and his sister. The evident hurry of Fitzalan to reach a city where a British minister resided, before the beginning of Lent, seemed to tally with this remarkably. Grace had been observed to labor under a singular excitement since this journey of Fitzalan's had been first mentioned, which was now explained. Augustus then had entered the street where so many distinguished persons were already assembled, with great precipitation.

"No one interferes in this affair but myself," said Lord Stratherne, quickly, in reply to the concluding observation of Miss Clifford, and he went up to Augustus, who approached with a slackened pace, and an air of great surprise.

Here a confusion was made by the vettura (which was nearly as large as a diligence, with four horses, and a garçon riding postillion) dashing into the Pontefici from the Ripetta, and drawing up at Fitzalan's door. The interior was already occupied by the other travelers, and the outside loaded with their luggage. Two additional *facchini* came running up, and reached the ground at the same time.

A conversation of apparently the most unimpassioned nature now took place between the gentlemen thus congregated. Lord Stratherne exchanged a few words with Lord Beauchamp, and the latter turned quietly to the Marquis of Wessex, who, after a moment's reflection appealed to the Baron von Schwartzthal. The Baron and Lord Beauchamp retired a few steps and conversed. Lord Stratherne offered Grace Clifford his arm, who took it with some emotion. "Should any thing happen to you, dear Courtenay," she said, "I could never forgive myself. Frederick should have done this."

"It is more gratifying that you should have appealed to me," said Lord Stratherne, "because I was not, perhaps, entitled to expect it."

"If you come out of it safe, I am yours forever," she replied, looking up in his face with an expression of fondness that made him tremble.

In the mean time, a warm parley had ensued

between the facchino who had first arrived, and his employer, the master vetturino, in which the other two facchini and the garçon vetturino, or actual driver of the carriage, took part, with all the vehemence of Italian vociferation. The man protested that he had knocked incessantly for a full half-hour, without getting the least sign, and that he had stopped because it was of no use to waken all the city on account of one man, who, *certamente*, was *o sordo o morto*. The English travelers in the interior also interfered, grumbling at the threatened detention, and telling the vetturino, in bad Italian, that he had better fall to knocking the man up, instead of disputing why it had not been done before. Lord Wessex, who had become as calm as if he had won unexpectedly at play, observed to the master vetturino that there was another way of access to Signor Fitzalan's rooms, by the Portone and great stair of the palace, and advised him to go up that way and inquire, instead of making a further uproar in the street. This produced quiet, and the master of the vettura set off accordingly, followed by two of the facchini, while the third remained to solicit of Miss Clifford the promised *douceur*.

The vetturino was long in returning, but the English party in the vettura, for some mysterious reason, exchanged their first discontent for a truly exemplary patience, and, conversing in whispers, appeared to recognize their detention as a providence. At length the vetturino came back, and announced that the Signor Fitzalan was unable to go as he had intended, one of his friends being taken suddenly ill.

Grace uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

"The signore is a painter, he says," continued the vetturino, "but he is rather a prince. He has paid the *viaggio* in full, and the *buona mano* for the garçon, and something for the facchini, *senza farsi domandare punto*."

"Then you saw Signor Fitzalan?" asked Grace.

"Signora, *si*," said the master of the vettura, while the facchini replaced and secured the matting that covered the luggage, and which had been removed to put on Fitzalan's expected boxes and portmanteaus.

"Can it be Frederick who is ill?" said Grace to Lord Stratherne, and looking round for Augustus, who was just finishing his arrangements with the baron.

"What friend of the Signor Fitzalan is ill?" demanded the baron, who contrived to hear every thing, and approaching the vetturino.

"Do I know?"

"Is it the gentleman to whose apartment you went to find Signor Fitzalan?" persisted the baron.

"Probably, since the Signor Fitzalan excused himself for detaining me (as if that had been necessary) by saying that he could not at the moment leave his friend."

"Ah, Fred is ill—no wonder," said Augustus, in a low voice, and, for the first time, speaking to his sister, whom he had come forth to seek. "I will go and see him. Stratherne will go home with you, Grace, and I will join you at breakfast."

Grace would not accede to this, but insisted on going to see Fred, too, and invited Lord Stratherne to accompany them. The marquis

and the baron also walked slowly out of the street. The tongues of the English travelers were let loose.

"Who is this young artist, living *au troisième* in the Via Pontefici, that three lords and the sister of a peer should come, at this hour, to see him off for Naples?"—"And a German baron, too! Do you know that that is the rich Baron Schwartzthal, who drives every day on the Pin-cian? His livery is a green so extremely dark that it has the effect of black, faced with red, and red linings, which they say is the livery of a personage who shall be nameless."—"We have had a plentiful sprinkling of nobility this morning—don't you think so, Arthur?" said a lady.—"For my part I am glad to have seen them so near.—Don't you think Lord Wessex is handsome? To think that he should be such a dreadful *roué*!"—"Miss Clifford gave him a cold shoulder, I thought."—"They say she is so cold, but I never saw a woman with a sweeter smile than she gave Lord Stratherne every now and then."—"Well, I am sorry we are not going to have this Mr. Fitzalan's company to Naples."

The three facchini had now a violent quarrel about the partition of the *buona mano*, occasioned by a scudo given to one of them by Grace Clifford; and, in the midst of it, the vettura got slowly under way, and rolled out of the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT of doors, it was disputed whether Lord Beauchamp's brother had Roman fever or had manifested symptoms of mental alienation. In the devout Italian circles, and among the English Roman Catholics, the latter version of the story obtained credence; and so great a misfortune, in connection with that to which it was attributed, was freely spoken of as a divine judgment for his apostasy. It was believed by the friends of the artist Fitzalan, that he was gone to Naples; a report first diffused by Lehmann, supposing it to be true, and which he afterward did not think it needful to contradict. Luigi and Rosa were the only domestics ever admitted beyond the vestibule. It was mentioned to them, and to the physician, that, to avoid visitors, Mr. Fitzalan desired it might not be known that he was in Rome. As his door in the Pontefici was locked and the knocker tied, his card taken down—as his studio boy had found another master—not a doubt was entertained of the fact. The meeting arranged between the Marquis of Wessex and Lord Stratherne did not come off, owing to a serious indisposition of the former, as Baron Schwartzthal reported to Lord Beauchamp.

The malaria fever has generally a run of one-and-twenty days; often, more. Its type, like that of all low nervous fevers, is very indeterminate. Clifford was treated *secundum artem*; which means, that the physician did his best to deprive him of the advantage he possessed in a constitution of iron, which, excepting the critical affections of childhood, had never been tried before by an hour of sickness. He had succumbed, on a Roman roof, to an enemy that he had baffled in the jungles of Bengal, and on the rice-grounds of America. Such is the power of an energetic spirit to sustain the vital resistance to the causes

of disease. It was doubtless the effect of the blow he received from the sight of Alice at St. Peter's that determined the victory of the miasma over that hitherto unassailable organization; whether this morbid influence of which we know so little, was imbibed on Fitzalan's terrace, or had been absorbed into the circulation on some previous exposure. Perhaps, the joy of recovering Alice might yet have enabled him to rally upon his invisible foe, until, by the timely exhibition of the specifics with whose virtue he was acquainted, he had extinguished its mysterious and parasitical vitality, had not the depressing anxiety that followed, broken his last reserve and completed his terrible defeat.

He ceased to recognize Alice; a low muttering delirium took place, succeeded by a state of coma yet more formidable. The gastric symptoms became more marked, and his fluttering pulse could scarcely be counted. The physician, Lord Beauchamp, and Stratherne, Grace, Louise, and Clarinelle, were in Clifford's saloon at a late hour in the evening; Alice had been left by the bed-side; the doors communicating with the bedroom had been closed by Grace Clifford.

"It is four weeks to-day since this attack declared itself," said the physician. "Every thing has been done that art could do. Miss Clifford's incessant attention to her brother, and that of my esteemed young friend, Mr. Fitzalan, have aided our endeavors; but I should be wrong to say that I consider the prognosis at present favorable."

"You think, then, doctor—"

"That when the fever leaves him he will probably sink," said the physician, in that grave tone which annihilates hope.

Clarinelle wept; Lady Beauchamp became deadly pale; her husband's lip quivered; Grace Clifford seemed to lose her self-command. She rose, walked about wildly; a bright spot burned in her delicate cheek. Lord Stratherne came to take her hand, murmuring some words of sympathy; but she turned from him and went to the mantle, where she leaned, covering her face.

"I would advise," said the physician, "that this be not mentioned yet to Mr. Fitzalan."

"Oh, no, no," said Grace in a tone of anguish, and turning round to them, "it must be broken to her at once."

"To her!" exclaimed Lady Beauchamp, growing paler yet.

"Yes, to her—to Alice," said Grace, again hiding her face.

"You mean it? You are certain of it?" faltered Lady Beauchamp, rising and approaching her. No one else spoke.

"Ask Courtenay," said Grace, in a low, languid voice. "He can tell you that the first evening when Fitzalan visited us, he spent the night with me. Yes, Stratherne, it was your sister that you carried in your arms."

Mrs. St. Liz swooned, which diverted the attention of the rest. Lord Stratherne slipped out of the room. Doctor —, much moved, took his leave; but when Lord Beauchamp, on a whisper from Grace, said a few words to him in a low voice, the physician answered, "The sex of the artist Fitzalan became known to me professionally, my lord, soon after his arrival in Rome; and Lady Alice explained to me who

she was, on my first visit to Mr. Clifford, lest I should misunderstand, and, consequently, badly treat his case. Secrets I have preserved so long may be considered safe with me now."

Meanwhile, Lord Stratherne had entered the bed-room, approached his sister, and fixed on her a tender and sorrowful regard. She perceived that Grace had betrayed her, and guessed the occasion of it.

"What is it, Courtenay?" she said, at length as he continued mutely to regard her. "I can bear the truth."

"I will not disguise it from you, dearest; of ultimate recovery there seems a slender hope."

For a few minutes, Alice remained plunged in deep thought; her eyes, fixed on vacancy, were pensive, but bright. She rose, and put her hand quietly within her brother's, then left him by the bed-side, and passed into her dressing-room. She lit the candles on the toilet-table, closed and bolted the glass door, and drew the curtains. The sound attracted her friends from the contiguous saloon. They came in; Clarinelle also, who had quickly recovered from her swoon. She had not seen Alice since the day at St. Peter's. The latter embraced her, and, pointing to the toilet-table, said, "You will find every thing arranged as it used to be, Clarie."

When Alice's own hair at length fell in profuse waves around her, Clarinelle kissed those golden tresses—her ancient care; but Louise stood with hands folded upon her breast, scarcely lifting her eyes to meet her friend's glance.

Dress is said to be a consequence and mark of the fall; but this is surely a mistake. Do persons suppose that, but for the first transgression, the majestic principle of drapery would never have been discovered? Shame, it is true, was a consequence of the mental illumination by which our first parents discerned the mixed condition of humanity as comprehending a spiritual and an animal element. Had they not been taught this by the sin, which, so to speak, precipitated the elements of the combination, doubtless they would have been taught it by revelation; or this eye-enlightening truth would have been evolved (as is most probable), and in a clearer form, by the dynamic reaction of virtue. The tree would have been the tree of knowledge still, although man, by rejecting a fruit pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, had sinlessly recognized in himself a principle, superior alike to the senses and the intellect, and capable of offering a victorious resistance to the fraudulent suggestions of God's subtlest and most potent adversary.

Dress, then, was doubtless always contemplated as a sign of humanity. Costume distinguishes the tribes of men; the successive epochs of civilization are visibly represented by changes in dress, from the imaginative and splendid individuality of the middle ages, to the gloomy centralization of the nineteenth century. In all ages, a separation to peculiar functions has been marked by an appropriate habit. The sexes have their distinct attire, and it is a sort of profanation for either to usurp that of the other. In resuming, forever, the sweet garb of hers, Alice Stuart, surrounded and assisted by her gentle and sorrowing friends, had the air of one engaged in a religious action, and, perhaps, a feeling of this kind was, in some degree, shared

by them all. But *her* high-toned imagination represented to her the solemn putting on of holy vestments, by a priest, in preparation for a sacrifice. Was she not about to assist at a sacrifice of her earthly affections?—to surrender with meekness, with faith, and in hope, the beloved of her heart? And she herself—the desire of his eyes—was she not, perhaps, about to be the last offering of a resigned will, submitting to the Divine? Her lips moved as in prayer, like a celebrant's as she put on one by one the mysterious and almost sacred garments. Even in this supreme affliction, however, which might seem to dispense with her vow, Alice was not breaking it. The complete discovery to all her friends rendered her disguise useless. She stood again by Clifford's bed-side, and her brother and friends were around her; but, though she read in every countenance the death of hope, looking down at the dark and decent folds of her robe—shrouded once more in the flowing garments of modesty—passing her delicate hand over the silken smoothness of her own living and radiant tresses—there breathed on her lip a smile of sacred confidence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE celebration of the Eucharist in private houses is doubtless an innovation; as its celebration in parochial churches was an innovation once upon the usage of offering in the Bishop's church only. No doubt, in practice, it is one of the most edifying peculiarities of the Anglican rite. At the same time, we are disposed to regret that the solemn reservation of the Sacrament, in accordance with primitive custom, is so strictly forbidden by the rubric. Except during the actual celebration of the august sacrifice, unhappily so infrequent, our churches are all the year in the condition to which those of the Roman Communion are reduced on Good Friday, in token of peculiar mourning. We have a sad spectacle of dismantled altars, of lights extinguished or banished; the perpetual symbol of the Divine Presence unknown; the Shechinah withdrawn which should overshadow our Thrones of Mercy.

At least it was an impressive scene that met the eye of the English chaplain, becoming accustomed to the—partly artificial—light of the darkened chamber, as, rising from the introductory prayers of the Visitation office, before commencing the exhortation, with the natural movement of one about to address others, he glanced round the sick man's apartment.

The most conspicuous object, from the lights upon it, was the altar, toward which all present were kneeling; then, the form of Clifford, supported by a pile of snowy pillows. His face, in spite of its pallor and sharpened outlines, preserved its character of grand and beautiful regularity, which the slight dark beard, for weeks untended, and curling mustache, heightened. His eye was even supernaturally penetrating, and the brow though robbed of its flowing locks, seemed more than ever the throne of thought and power. It appeared that he listened with more than mere resignation to the assurance that there should be "no greater comfort

to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ by patiently suffering adversities, troubles and sicknesses." His glance of meditative acquiescence seemed to recognize the true solution of that dark problem—human life. Defeated, and in the fetters of adverse destiny, a victim, and dying, he was Frederick Clifford still. His will and his intelligence, sustained, no doubt, by Divine sympathy and aids of celestial grace, triumphed over the last and irremediable disappointment.

When it came to the recitation of the creed in the form of questions to the sick man, by which he is to know whether he believes as a Christian man should or no, a voice of music, low and sweet, but not that of sickness, answered—"All this I steadfastly believe."

That calm and observant eye of the chaplain (not less observant in a scene in some respects new, and in many of unusual interest) had already marked a young lady kneeling at the bed-side. On the bed before her was the open prayer-book, in which she was following the service, and she had looked up from it, and seemed to obey a slight movement of Clifford's lips in making the response. Her head was covered with a veil, as if in a church, but as her face was thus momentarily turned in profile, the clergyman observed that it was indeed one of exquisite beauty, yet not, as he had expected, that of the sick man's sister. Grace was, of course, present, as were Augustus, Louise, and Mrs. St. Liz. Lord Beauchamp, from a high-minded feeling, had made a point of this, though he liked not assisting at Protestant worship—especially at the administration of the Holy Communion. But it had been said out of doors, and by their relatives, the — and —, that Clifford, if aware of his state, would never die unreconciled to the Church.

Immediately after the creed, follows, as all may know, the examination into the moral condition of the sick, who, in all this service, is presumed to be an apparently dying man. The priest, approaching the bed, proceeded to satisfy himself that Clifford was in a conscious and rational state, and particularly that his mind was at rest in regard to the religion of the Church of England. The young lady kneeling at the bed-side, said, in a sweet, firm voice, that Mr. Clifford was unable to articulate, but that he would answer by signs, which she would, if the Father pleased, interpret. The chaplain, and probably all present, felt that this was unfortunate. Nevertheless, not only were the replies rendered almost as rapidly as if Clifford had possessed the power of speech, but it was evident, by indefinable traits, that they were his own. In general the signs used were an arbitrary and singularly simple alphabet, the frequent amusement of Clifford and Fitzalan; but, sometimes, though rendered by Alice instantly, they were in themselves significant. When asked in what he placed his trust he pointed to the crucifix on the altar, designating it by tracing the sign of the cross in the air.

"In my crucified Saviour," said Lady Alice. He signified his entire acquiescence in that answer.

But the priest was strangely moved when, all others having withdrawn, that sweet-voiced and beauteous woman, in the flower of youthful and

clearly maiden loveliness, began to interpret the confession that Clifford especially desired the comfort of making. Who was this, of so courageous a simplicity, and so singular in her sex? Who?—that a man so reserved and impenetrable was willing to make her the channel of his humblest and most secret confessions?

Clifford confessed before Almighty God, and that cloud of blessed witnesses by whom we are ever surrounded, and the spiritual father into whose ear he poured his penitence, that he had sinned too much, in thought, word, and deed. It was 'his fault—his fault—his grievous fault;' and thus, and thus, had he done. The chief burden of this self-accusation was, that, confiding too much in his own force of character and subtlety of intellect, he had forgotten his dependence, his weakness. Arrogantly dreaming how he might even change times and laws, he had been smitten, and deservedly, by the hand of a man whom he had despised as weak, but whose childish and passionate violence had carried it over his boasted calmness and forethought. With the clear analysis which was a peculiarity of Clifford's mind, he traced this radical sin into the details of the moral and spiritual life, following the order of the commandments. And at every one he stepped aside to acknowledge some isolated infirmity, or incursion of man's corrupt nature, and usually added—"This I have done, it is probable, more times than I can now recollect." The priest perceived that this was not one of the vague confessions to which he had been used, but of that specific accuracy, which only habit and a devout belief in the accruing benefit, can nerve men to make; so that he became consciously embarrassed as his penitent approached that commandment which, in the Roman Church, is called the sixth. Clifford had already confessed things, not criminal in the sight of men, but which a proud and sensitive man would have been most reluctant to betray. Would he flinch as little here, and could those lips which seemed to breathe a heavenly purity, still convey the burden of his self-accusing spirit?"

"To give you, Father," said the penitent, speaking still by another's fluent lips, "that just idea of my spiritual state which I ought, I must disavow all stain of those sins which few of my sex escape, and which, in nearly all, may be presumed as the ordinary form of mortal transgression. And even in this you may observe the influence of that spiritual sin of which I have spoken. At an age so early that temptation could address itself only, as in Eden, to curiosity, I had already, with the precocious sagacity that in some things proved my snare, made the observation of what it is that has ever conquered the conquerors and deceived the sages, and I resolved that, cost me what it might, I would be master of myself. To yield in no single instance to a foible that would shear the locks of my Nazarite force, and render me a common man, became, by repeated acts of self-control, the law and habit of a will that even in boyhood was inflexible. The tempting demon of youthful curiosity overmastered and repelled—the meaner victory over the feebler delusion of the senses could not cost me much. It was thus that I arrived at that more perilous period, when, by a law like that which secures the

eternal renovation of the youth of the world by the kindly burst of spring, there dawned on my soul an ideal of blended sweetness and purity, of brilliant fancy and earnest truth, such as, perhaps, could visit an unpolluted imagination alone, but which became, thenceforth, the guest and familiar of mine. And as, in none of my acquaintance of the other sex, however amiable, could I ever discover, or fancy that I discovered, the counterpart of this enchanting eidolon, I was spared that last and usually fatal illusion of a sentiment. And now it was, Father, that surrounded by temptations which were powerless over me, in the tranquil depths of my own spirit, I could for the first time discern, as in a mirror of things divine, the evil and personal degradation of even one act of impurity; I began to detest that as sin which I had renounced as infirmity: from the lowest and most humane motives I rose to the highest, and I who had been chaste because I was resolved to be stronger than others, serener and wiser, continued to be so because I perceived that what a Divine benediction has made the fountain of infinite generations is the holiest thing in nature, and that the flesh itself, which we defile by sin, has been hallowed by the Son of God, and is made precious and venerable by the beauty and luster of its promised resurrection."

Thrilling accents, uttered with that tremulous sweetness, like a prelude to the love-songs of the immortals!

"I can not then charge myself," pursued the interpreting voice, after a deep pause, "with profaning in my own body the sacred members of Christ; I can not accuse myself of indulging unlawful wishes for that which was another's; but that which was in a sense my own—the heart and the form once innocently coveted and holily pledged—when He withdrew it from me, I have never been able sincerely to resign. It is here that, even now, once more, my will refuses to surrender the gift which my soul had conquered; it is here that I feel at this moment the bitterness of yielding the victory to death."

At this point the calmness of the beautiful interpreter suddenly gave way; she burst into tears, and hid her face in the bed. The Confessor was sensible of something very unusual; yet it was plain to whom his penitent alluded. Clifford's story was too well known—and though he had hitherto seldom interrupted, by any words of common-place consolation, these revelations of an humbled, though still struggling spirit, he could not now refrain from saying—"If it be the will of God, my dear sir, that this sickness be unto death, should it not rather console you, even in the point of view of human affections, that you are going to her you have lost, since she can not return to you?"

The interpreter lifted her streaming face, and said, in a whisper very different from the musical intonation that she had hitherto employed—"Forgive me, dear Frederick, for giving way, one moment, to my feelings." And, looking up at the clergyman, she added in a voice that made him start—"Father, I am Alice Stuart."

When the absolution had been pronounced, their friends were again summoned. The brief missa was soon said. The holy gifts were communicated to Lord Stratherne and Grace, then to Alice, still kneeling at Clifford's side,

and, last, to himself. Alice rose immediately, and, with the assistance of Lord Beauchamp, placed her exhausted friend in an easier position. Frederick's countenance was slightly changed, even since the commencement of the service.

CHAPTER X.

It was a clear night in Rome, starry and cold. A man came forth from the portal of the Hotel de Russie. He passed under the portico of one of the Cardinalitan churches on the Piazza del Popolo, and entered the Corso. Down the Corso he went with rapid strides. At the Palazzo——, he paused a moment, to ask a question of the porter.

"Sì, Signore: vive ancora."

The querist made no reply, and pursued his way with an unrelaxed pace, till he reached the Piazza di Venezia; he turned by the old Venetian Palace, whose frowning magnificence is worthy of St. Mark's; he passed round the front of the Church of Gesù; he ascended the long street and broad, steep stair that lead to the Capitol; again he descended from that classic and once sovereign height to the immortal Forum; his feet resounded over the stones of the Via Sacra; he passed under the Arch of Titus, and at length entered one of the arches of the amphitheater. Being little more than a fortnight before Easter, there could be no moonlight; and the Colosseum was therefore a solitude. The bright, starry vault seemed to rest like a dome upon the aerial circuit of its vast sweep of arch and wall. The visitor little heeded this, however. He was in the arena where Christian martyrs fought with wild beasts—where the gladiator perished for the sport of an imperial populace; and he drew near to the cross erected in the center of the now consecrated precinct. He seated himself on the steps of the base, and raised for a moment his large slouched hat. How little does he think of the millions who, at one time or another, have breathed a life like his own in that ruined and plundered, but it would seem, indestructible Roman Circus! How little does he think that tomorrow his clay shall be as theirs, and his spirit added to the infinite and ever-cotemporary multitude of the dead!

The sound of carriage wheels comes across the arena; and very soon the visitor is joined at the cross by a woman.

"You are punctual, Augusta."

"Have you heard how he is to-night?"

"He lives, but is dying. The English chaplain——"

"Has given him the Sacrament, and all that, this morning;—I know it. Lady Alice was present, and avowed herself openly. Her story—which no one, to be sure, tells right—is the talk of Rome. I always thought her oaths would not stand in the way of a sufficient temptation."

"Pardon me. The revelation was not made by herself until all the Cliffords, and her brother, had learned it from Grace. And still she holds herself ready, so soon as Clifford's death shall have occurred, to follow your directions so far as the changed circumstances make it pos-

sible. We treat her hardly enough, I think; let us at least do justice to her good faith."

"You grow warm in her defense. Well, it is certainly best to give up now all idea of removing her from her family. In a month or two she will be of age, and, if suffered to enter into possession of her fortune, may serve us in other ways. Without plundering her, which we must not do, for our own sakes, it is well enough to have a resource of that kind in an emergency. I trust your life will be a long one, Mark; for I am just beginning to make use of you to some purpose."

"Wessex and young Stratherne are to meet to-morrow morning, at a spot beyond the walls," said Matson, coldly.

"What sort of a shot is Stratherne?"

"A steady eye and hand; but not too much practice. Wessex, on the contrary, has been practicing daily in the gallery since the challenge passed."

"Shocking! If he kills young Stratherne he ought to be tried and hung for murder. Yet, being my brother, I should not quite like that."

"It would be rather hard for Lady Alice and Miss Clifford, if they should lose each a brother, and each a lover, in the same day; which would happen if Wessex were to shoot Stratherne and Clifford were to die," said Matson, meditatively.

"Well, we meet again to-morrow night. As soon as the duel is over, you will of course send me word what is the result. I should really like to be present at a duel. It must be such a curious thing to go out with a couple of men in as good health as yourself, and know that the chances are you bring back one of them a corpse. You drive out Wessex, I suppose?"

"No; he is to meet me on the ground."

They were now passing under one of the entrance arches of the Colosseum, and Lady Fitzjames stopped to kiss the Cross on one of the piers, and recite the prayers for which an indulgence has been granted by the pope. "It is understood by my people," she observed, "that I come here to make the stations; had I not found you, it is what I should have done. *Au revoir.*"

They parted by the light of the lamp that burns to show the cross to the devotees who may resort thither with a view to the indulgence. The *au revoir* was carelessly uttered; but, though Augusta did not love Matson, she would not have sprung so lightly into her carriage had she known that she was parting with one whose hours were numbered. He pursued his way back through the ruined Forum, over the Capitoline Hill, and by the long streets lined with palaces and churches. Fatigued by his long course, and knowing that he was to rise at five, the murderer of Mary Hervey retired immediately to rest; and, with the habit which men acquire by a life of irregular activity, was asleep almost from the moment that his head touched the pillow of his luxurious couch.

Whether the removal of one of the grave responsibilities which have hitherto attached to the actions of the higher classes in Christendom, can take place without endangering a principle that has hitherto separated the Gothic civilization from that of the East, and of pagan antiquity—the principle, namely, that the individual,

though subject to the state, is never resolved into it—merits the consideration of moralists and students of the higher politics. The reconciliation of the law of chivalry with the law of Christian love, is so little difficult that they may indeed be said so to oppose, as mutually to sustain, each other—that is to say, they are, as it were, the polar manifestations of one living principle, now exhibiting itself as meekness, and now as self-denying courage; here showing the lamb-like nature, and here the lion heart; prompting in the same individual, forgiveness of injuries and generosity to foes, and resistance to oppression, the defense of the oppressed. And, without confounding in this vindication of the knightly character (traditional though now it be), any apology for the false code of honor and the miserable custom of modern dueling, it may be affirmed, unhesitatingly, that “God gave not men swords in vain,” and that He meant them to be so used as to secure the awful seriousness of our life in this world, militant from the beginning to the end.

Lord Beauchamp, on account of the uncertainty of his brother's condition, was fain to substitute St. Liz in his place as Lord Stratherne's second, when he received from Baron Schwartzthal the announcement that his principal was at length prepared for the meeting so long before agreed upon. But when St. Liz arrived in the morning with his phaeton, it appearing unlikely that any change would occur in so short an absence, Augustus determined on accompanying them. On their way to the ground, the only observations made, that had reference to the very serious affair they were engaged in, were a question asked by Lord Beauchamp, and its answer.

“You don't mean to throw away your fire, I take it, Stratherne?”

“Certainly not,” said the earl, gravely.

The spot appointed was at the foot of a gigantic fragment of an aqueduct, of which some six or seven arches alone remained. It was at some distance from the road where they were to leave the carriages. They found Lord Wessex and his friend on the ground, and were surprised to find, instead of a single chariot, two.

“What is the use,” said St. Liz, wrathfully, “of having four servants to witness such an affair, when two would have sufficed?”

The spot itself, however, was necessarily hidden from the view of the attendants, by the interposing piers of the aqueduct. All were aware that an apology was out of the question.

“These pistols,” said Lord Beauchamp, producing a case, “were the property of the late Lord Stratherne. They now belong to his sister, Lady Alice Stuart, but have been for some time in possession of my friend. My friend, however, I undertake to say, has never used the arms, and is wholly unacquainted with their power, which is not the case, I think, with your principal, baron. If you do not object, I have reasons for wishing them to be used.”

“I do not object,” said the baron.

The baron loaded the pistols, and the parties were placed. Lord Beauchamp and St. Liz retired to the pier of the aqueduct; the second of Lord Wessex was to give the word; and for that purpose the Baron von Schwartzthal took a position as nearly as possible equidistant from

both parties, and at little more than dueling distance from both.

“How oddly Wessex turns!” said St. Liz. “Is the man crazed?”

“One! two! three!” were pronounced with a clear and ringing voice. The shots were nearly simultaneous. Lord Stratherne fired at his adversary, and Lord Wessex at the Baron! Both the latter fell at the same moment. Lord Beauchamp and St. Liz sprang forward, with exclamations of horror. The baron was stretched on the sod, with the slightly gory hole of the ball in his left temple, and quite dead.

The three gentlemen gathered confusedly round the marquis. He was bleeding profusely, but perfectly sensible. St. Liz and Lord Beauchamp began to take measures to arrest the hæmorrhage. He waved them off.

“The baron?” he said, gasping.

“You have done for him,” said St. Liz, very pallid, but who alone could speak.

“Let it pass that the duel was between us,” said Lord Wessex, faintly. “Stratherne, I thank you. I have nothing to forgive. Tell your sister that—Matson is dead.” With these words, he fainted from loss of blood. His valet came running up.

“Is my lord wounded?” he said. “And the baron is killed!” he added, observing the body left, uncared for, on the turf.

“Did you know who your lord came out to fight?” demanded St. Liz.

“My lord himself told me this morning that it was the baron, sir.”

“I think we had better let it pass indeed,” said St. Liz.

They could not get the body of the baron through the gate, owing to a municipal law which forbids the entrance of a corpse within the walls. It remained in the chariot of the deceased all day, and was buried at night, under the direction of the police, and of the banker with whom Matson had opened a credit. Lord Wessex reached his hotel alive, and Lady Fitzjames learned, almost at the same moment, the death of Mark Matson, her brother's dangerous wound, and, from the latter's own pale lips—his hope of an heir!

We must return to Frederick Clifford. In those hours of lucid intelligence and energy which followed the cessation of the fever, Clifford made Alice detail to him the symptoms under which he had labored, and the treatment that the physicians had employed. He then told her that the opinion expressed in regard to the issue was undoubtedly correct. “No means known to them,” he said, “can long support a flame which is now consuming its last aliment. It is a chance if any thing can; but I will indicate to you the only course that, humanly speaking, presents a hope.” He named to her several plants of virtues little known, but which were indigenous to the Roman Campagna and the neighboring hills. He described to her the method of preparing them for use, and the mode of their administration. These remedies, and these only, was she to suffer him to take when he became again, as soon, inevitably he must, helpless and unconscious. She might allow the exhibition, in quantities extremely moderate, of certain appropriate stimuli: but, for the husbanding of his slender remaining strength, she

should cause him to be placed immediately into a hydrostatic bed.

That fearful sinking in the socket which Frederick predicted too surely, took place. The physicians shrugged their shoulders at the means proposed by Lady Alice in obedience to her lover's directions; and it required all her determined spirit to overpower the fears of Lord Beauchamp and Louise, who, without entertaining more than the faintest hope of their brother's recovery, looked upon this procedure as involving an abandonment of all the energetic means of safety. For a week, Clifford lay between life and death: the glassy eye, over which the fatal film had already gathered—the profound torpor of every sensitive function—announced that the vital power, driven to its last retreats, was contending, inch by inch, with the decomposing force that resides in the blind affinities of inorganic nature. The physicians intimated that it was useless to oppose the wishes of Lady Alice, since the case was clearly beyond the reach of medical art. At length, the eye became once more transparent and luminous; the soul rushed back, as with a sudden triumph, to that countenance which had worn for many days the inexpressive pallor and calmness of death. Chained still by the most absolute muscular weakness, and inarticulate, Clifford recognized Alice, nevertheless, by the faintest smile. Somewhere about the middle of the Holy Week, his convalescence was an established fact.

The ball was successfully extracted from the wound of Lord Wessex, and he was pronounced by the surgeon—with good treatment, and accidents excepted—a certain cure; free, at all events, from immediate danger. But, the same night, he tore off his bandages. He was already dying when this was discovered. He desired that Lord Stratherne might not lay his death to heart; as, if the young earl's shot had failed, he had been prepared to put an end to his own life in another way. The true history of this affair was communicated by Lord Beauchamp to the Cardinal Secretary of State; and, after some consideration, the Roman government resolved to take no other notice of it than by requiring Lord Stratherne to quit the Pontifical States immediately.

As for Father Matteo, it is alone worthy of notice that Lady Alice continued, until she quitted Rome, to avail herself of his spiritual guidance. He said that she was a sincere Catholic in all respects, saving a prejudice as to the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church, which, in her case, he believed, was really invincible, and, by a special grace of the Virgin, interfered with neither faith nor charity.

CHAPTER XI.

It was on a brilliant morning of the auspicious month of June, that the chapel of Lennox House was filled with the *élite* of Britain, assembled to witness the double marriage of Alice Stuart and Grace Clifford.

By one of those peculiar privileges of the chapels of this princely house, of which we have already had occasion to speak, the nuptial mass (as in the language of rituals it should be called),

celebrated on this occasion by the Hon. and Rev. Herbert Courtenay, was ordered according to the rite of that portion of the Catholic Church to which the duke, as a North Briton, necessarily belonged. On this occasion, for the first time, also, the celebrant and assistants—the latter the duke's six chaplains—were arrayed in the vestments appointed by the law of the Church—in chasuble and copes of white silk and gold, in albes of lace, like bridal veils, and richly-broidered stoles. The sanctuary was hung with tapestry and decorated with a profusion of flowers. Wax lights—twelve in number, perhaps to signify the apostles—burned in the golden candlesticks of that carved marble altar which has been already described. The credence glowed with the splendor of the sacred vessels. The cup was offered in a jeweled chalice of elaborate workmanship, presented by Alice as a bridal offering. On the same day she endowed a bishopric in a distant colony, and a church in a poor and populous district of this overgrown metropolis. Those who think that the rich and great ought to reserve their splendor for their own tables and retinue, and leave the table and the service of the Lord in poverty, we refer, for the patterns of all this, to an old-fashioned book called the Bible.

The ceremony, in short, was such as has not been witnessed in England since the early and yet unspotted reign of the sixth Edward; it was such a service as Cranmer was wont to celebrate, which it would have gladdened the heart of Ridley to witness, and which exhibited the purified Church of England as she was in the beauty and love of her espousals, before an adulterous tampering with the foreign reformation had led her to prevaricate in her fidelity to the Eternal Bridegroom, and to hide under a bushel the hallowed light which once burned so clear on the altars of the Lord.

The procession moves down the beautiful cloisters of the new house! We shall leave the bridesmaids and the dresses, the bishops, and the presence of royalty, to the Morning Post; but we may mention that the difference in the behavior of the two brides was much observed. Grace could never be otherwise than high-bred and self-possessed. Her mien might have been quoted as the ideal of patrician dignity softened by the timidity of the woman. All agreed that her manner was perfect.

Alice was evidently absorbed in the religious solemnity. So profoundly hushed was the thronged chapel, so clear her own articulation at the moment of repeating the vows, that every syllable was distinctly audible, even to those who could barely gain the portal; and though it was in silence, and bowed within the silver gates of that sumptuous sanctuary, that she listened to the chanting of the nuptial psalm, from the commencement of the eucharistic office her voice blended with the burst of the response, adding its volumes of sweet sound to the harmonies of the *Ter Sanctus*, and surprising you into the belief of an angelic unison in the *Gloria in Excelsis*.

This, and her air of rapt devotion, as if she had been a St. Cecilia, as was observed, were severely criticised. Yet, after all, when we consider the sufferings which had preceded her happiness, when we remember by what a scene in

her own history that chapel had been additionally hallowed, we may perhaps pardon her for forgetting the surrounding crowd, and thinking more of her Maker and Preserver and His Heavenly Court, than of measuring her inspired and holy passion of Love and religious gratitude by what might approve itself to these slaves of convention.

Let us transfer the scene to a spot which no such unmeet presence is permitted as yet to profane—to the stately and picturesque courts of Bromswold, the bright gardens in which they are embowered, and the majestic sylvan solitudes surrounding all.

"That I should live to see this day, Eccellenza! But I thought, when I saw the Signor Fitzalan enter our rooms that first morning, that our troubles were over."

"And you knew the Signor Fitzalan, Luigi?"

"Did I know her ladyship? But what was I to do, your excellency? Do I ever know what is in your mind, monsignore? If your signory took no notice, I supposed that your signory had your reasons. Had I ever known your excellency's penetration at fault before in so many years? Till I saw your excellency fallen on the bed, and heard your delirium, I could not persuade myself it was possible you had been deceived. Ah, what days were those! Giorni benedetti!—But they are over, and your signory is happy at last."

We have described Edith's nuptial evening—a license rarely taken by the moderns;—it can not be supposed that Alice's was less beautiful and solemn, in the house where she was at once a hostess and a bride. The chastened joy of her parents, the seriousness of her friends, the pious reverence of her brothers, the sympathy of sisters, found all a place.

May we perhaps fitly describe a room where Clifford at one time found himself?—a room paneled with lilac silk in pale gold moldings, and decorated with many fine works of art. Two huge mirrors reflected the planet-like light of its silver cresset lamp. Two statues, less than life, adorned it:—the Flora of the Capitol; and the draped Antinous of the Lateran, the augustly beautiful head of which Alice had fancied to resemble her lover's. On one porphyry tripod was an Etruscan vase—the design an holocaust; on another, a huge patera of exquisite form, on which was delineated the solemnity of an ancient oath. The mantle-piece, of white statuary marble, was a bas-relief of singular beauty, by one of Alice's friends, representing the Pleiades mourning forever their lost sister. It had been his own gift, at Rome. Above it, hung the Departure from the Sepulcher, the gift of her mother, yet the most serious and affecting of her own works.

The adjoining room, which he enters, is green silk and gold. It has a carpet that muffles the

step; it seems the bower of one who is a princess in the land. On a table of ivory, a branch candlestick of gold contains two ornate wax-lights—the nuptial tapers. As many slender vases, of the same material as the branch, contain each a lily and a rose. The chairs are all of ivory; but the chief object in the soft light and stillness of that bridal chamber is the ivory couch, classically formed, profusely carved, and half enveloped in clouds of lace. On the counterpane of the bed—white satin brilliantly embroidered in gold and colors—the work and gift of Clarinelle St. Liz—reposes the same memento of the divine sufferings that have purchased and sanctified all human bliss, which formerly protected the bed of the lonely Fitzalan.

A door is open into an oratory, where are that same altar and its furniture, and the prayer-desk, and the very books of prayer, from her dear room in the Pontefice; and here shall now be sung once more, by their blended voices, the cheering psalms of the holy Compline.

A window, too, is open, and the curtain drawn. 'Tis a midsummer night. The moon shines on woods and lawns, graceful gardens and a gleaming terrace, where a fountain throws into the air its silver sheaf. And resting on the balcony is a form that catches the moonlight on its bridal raiment, and glistens like the foamy sheaf of the fountain. For the first time their tenderness—a mystery even to themselves—overflows all its banks; and yet at its simplest token the softer visage blushes, like the "sociable angel" interrogated by Adam on the ways of love in its supernal bowers. Henceforth, their guardian angels shall keep by day and night a social watch, and own a common charge.

Types of the masculine energy that conquered truth, and of the winning love that always had possessed it!—If wisdom sprang armed from the head of self-governing Power, Beauty rose from the bosom of that impulsive and wave-like nature whose law of freshening movement is a mysterious and celestial attraction. Areté and Agapé! They are both divine, but only in their union. Painful on earth are the trials by which that union is prepared and progressively accomplished. There are who seek the beautiful alone, chiefly, without self-conquest: this is bondage, idolatry, sin, disappointment, death. Yet the victorious Will alone could found but a cheerless sovereignty over the world; the genial Sympathy, by itself, be fruitful only in sensual phantoms—such as deluded the Heathen—such as corrupted Christendom—such as still captivate Infidelity. It is in loving that Power learns to suffer; it is in suffering that Love learns to conquer. The end is the eternal wedlock in which the archetypes of the true Science and the true Art are at length blended:—as the prize of its victory, Righteousness becomes Bliss, and Bliss reposes securely in the bosom of Righteousness.

THE END.

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